













# A GALLERY OF WOMEN

*BY THEODORE DREISER*

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An American Tragedy  
Sister Carrie  
The Financier  
Chains  
The Titan  
The "Genius"  
Jennie Gerhardt

Moods :  
Cadenced and Declaimed

Dreiser Looks at Russia

A Book About Myself

Plays Natural and Supernatural

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**A GALLERY OF WOMEN**  
**BY**  
**THEODORE DREISER**

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**R E I N A**



## A GALLERY OF WOMEN

### REINA

**T**HE home from which she came was a makeshift affair at best, with a mother who was soft and placative and sentimental and with no least grasp of life, and a semi-neurotic father of Dutch extraction who was little more than a left-over sprout of a decayed branch of a family tree that somewhere and at some time may have been something. Here (meaning a small town in our American north-west) he was a locksmith, and from all accounts an erratic one. He curled his moustache upward and donned a dress-suit once or twice a year. He thought he could play the violin. He told vile stories and seemed to like to shock his own children. He was described to me as a physical coward, a man who browbeat his wife (where he was afraid of other men). Being the irresponsible that he was, he shifted most of the burden of life to her, who made a large percentage of the living by running a rooming-house.

First impressions are keenest. When I first saw Reina I thought she was a silly, and yet not quite. That little lavender hat pulled down over her bobbed tow-coloured hair (bleached to that shade, of course) and the lavender throw that accompanied it seemed to suggest a keen sense of harmony, as did the very light grey suit reaching to but an inch or two below the knees. She had a habit of standing as a boy will, legs far apart, head thrown back and grey-blue eyes dancing with an irresistible zest for life. At least, I said, she is alive—very much so. And then the really funny stories, always vulgar but laugh-provoking in spite of anything one might think, and leaving one wondering how she could have the effrontery to tell them so calmly. It seemed to imply disrespect and at times even a low estimate of oneself. And yet there was no least trace of pruriency in her stories; rather, it was a coarse and yet healthy sense of the ridiculous which prompted her.

Let us say that she was unconsciously and at times even charmingly vulgar, which may seem to be a paradox but is not.

Rhoda, the elder half-sister, was a really beautiful girl, intelligent and very clever. Beautiful enough to be a figure of sorts in the movies, she was still sweet enough to retain the natural charms of a temperament that was as yet vague but beauty bent. She had not become hard or bold and pushing. Hers was a nature that craved the perpetuation of all home-ties and connections if possible. You are to remember that Rhoda had not seen Reina for nearly five years, herself having married and removed from her native city five years before. Since then Reina had married.

For months before meeting her I had been hearing of the interesting if not wonderful Reina. She was young, pretty, bubbling with life, a good horsewoman. She was affectionate and sisterly, and was now married to a young managing lumberman. They had had a little home in some interior lumber district in Washington, but Reina, accustomed as she was to the metropolitan delights of Spokane and Seattle, soon grew tired of this backwoods life and fled, riding on a caboose to a main-line station some forty miles away. The husband, seemingly unable to live without her, had thrown up his connection with the lumber business, which was earning him four thousand a year, and had followed her. Twice in a married life of not more than three years she had left him in this way because the conditions surrounding the thing he chanced to be doing were not to her taste. And in both instances he had dropped everything and followed her, hoping to induce her to come back to him. Temperamentally, apparently, he needed her. After knowing her for some time and realizing what a fool she was in some ways and what a pest she might prove to some men in almost every way, and knowing him too, as I did then, I could still see how he might like and even need her. She had health, energy, humour and youthfulness, at least, and probably represented those qualities to him. When things were going against them, though, instead of being an aid or a comfort, she could be very dour, nasty, really.

When I met Sven he was not more than twenty-five, good-looking and ambitious. More, he was tactful and approachable, but without the advantages of an education. His father,

a Swedish farmer and dairyman, had apparently not believed in giving his children even a common school education. On the contrary, so I heard, he did his best to handicap them in this respect and in consequence Sven, who had run away from the farm at fifteen, used such English as he had heard spoken about him. Unless cautioned he would use *done* for *did*, *learned* for *taught*, *seen* for *saw*, and some other of those amusing Americanisms beloved by those who constitute the rank and file. Once he learned that he was using incorrect English, however, he preferred to remain silent or to imitate those who were speaking correctly, which was much more than could be said for Reina. Professionally he was a good lumberman, with a practical knowledge of woods and skilled in their preparation for the market. He was also, as I know, an excellent garage man, having mastered the mysteries of the automobile and being able to manage a garage when necessary. And he was the type of youth who was willing to do almost anything in order to get along.

But if Sven used bad grammar, Reina used worse. Mrs. Malaprop at her worst wasn't a patch. "Say, ya know what I done yesterday? Gee, I wish ya coulda seen! I sure come near ballin' things up, all right, all right. It was this way, see. Me an' Sven was walkin' along Seventh Street when who should come chasin' but—well, give a guess. Monty! Sure. The same old Monty. An' in a nobby coat, too. Gee, you oughta seen! That guy musta come into some money since I saw him last. An' it didn't make no difference to him that Sven an' me was married. He didn't get it, I guess. Ya can't learn that guy nothin'. Just grabbed me by the arm like he used to. 'Where ya goin'? Who's your friend?' Then I introduced him, an' Sven lookin' at me an' him all the time like he could swalla us. Can ya feature that? An' me always tellin' Sven there wasn't nobody could get fresh with me! Well, I come pretty near cashin' in then, but I had to laugh afterwards. But I got away with it. 'Here,' I says, 'do ya wanta get hurt? This ain't school-days no more. Meet my husband, Sven, see?' Then he savvies an' gets awful polite an' nice like. An' Sven he softens a little because I ring in that Monty's father has money an' that Monty might be lookin' fer sompin to invest in, an'

in a little bit they gets to talkin'. But can ya feature that stuff? An' Sven as jealous as he is? Well, when Sven wasn't lookin' ya bet I give Monty one look. 'Watcha doin'? Where ya goin'?' Ya bet I got it over to him that he'd better cut that stuff. Los Angeles ain't Spokane by a lot. But fer a minute there I thought there might be sompin rough. I sure did. Ya know Sven when he gets hot. Gee! I sure was curled up there for a second or two. But he thinks Monty went to school with me, so it's all right now, see?"

That was typical of much that I listened to for months and months, and in spite of anything and everything done to make her see the error of her ways. Grammar was not to be impressed upon Reina, via correction, example or a stick. She could sit in upon the most perfect English spoken by as many as seventeen masters of the art and of a sudden burst in with "Whoja think me an' Sven seen?" or "Sven an' me was thinkin' . . ." And her sister, who because of her beauty had been able to marry an easterner from upper New York State of no little position and social training, although she had since left him and had managed to place herself in a more interesting walk of life, was made restless and unhappy by the sharp realization that since leaving home she had encountered conditions which had taught her much that her sister did not know.

But what a bubbling, enthusiastic temperament! It was easy to understand why a man, if he were not too well informed about grammar himself, might become very much attached to Reina. She had the pertness and inquisitiveness of a collie or a crow. And she was famishing for want of pleasures and luxuries such as others possessed but of which she had scarcely tasted as yet. Hence sister Rhoda's quaint little apartment in Hollywood, with its balconies, its flowers, its french windows, its Persian cat and Chow dog, seemed to affect her as might strong drink a devotee of the demon rum. Gee!—her favourite expression. Everything was either "classy" or "swell" or "nobby" or, occasionally, "the cat's whiskers," or even—I blush to repeat a tithe of all the amazing expressions she used—"the cat's pajamas." A reproduction of *The Pot of Basil* which ornamented one wall was "swell," but "Gee, she's kinda long-legged, ain't she?" and "A dress like that wouldn't go now. She musta lived somewhere where they

wore them things." The nude figure of a woman draped about one side of a glass fish-bowl brought forth "Didja ever see a goldfish bowl like that before? Classy, eh? But she ain't got so much of a figure. Ya can see better'n that at Pantages any day."

"The trouble is, Reina," I suggested, "the artist lacked a suitable model. He should have had a graceful girl like you."

"Well, he oughta come with me. I could show him some that would make him leave his mother."

That Rhoda resented this brash and brassy line of comment, even while it amused her, was obvious from the first. She had been talking so much of the interesting Reina, thinking of her as she had been a few years before, whereas Reina had never been all or maybe any of the things she thought her. Most likely then she had judged her with scarcely any standards of comparison, whereas by now she had come upon many standards that had served to change her greatly. In consequence she scarcely knew what to think of Reina now, but was still too fond of her—the blood-tie and old memories affecting her too much—to be severely critical. At the same time she was greatly troubled lest I conceive all sorts of queer notions concerning her and her parents, which was only partly true.

One of the things that interested me from the first was why so sober and industrious a man as Sven should have become so interested in Reina as to want to marry her and follow her about in this way. He was practical and quiet, determined to get along and provide Reina with all she desired, while Reina had no least sense of order or responsibility. Before and for some time after marrying Sven she had been the boon companion of a girl named Bertha, who appears to have been a combination of meal-ticket and attendant. This girl possessed the double advantage of looks and charm for men, two qualities which Reina admired intensely in any woman. Plus some means—Bertha, by the way, was the daughter of a well-to-do laundryman, from whom she could always get money and a goodly portion of which Reina could get from her, as well as some little from her own mother. With these several sums at their command, and because the home town from which they derived was small and Spokane and Seattle and Tacoma within easy striking distance, they were accustomed to race



back and forth between these places, where relatives were supposed to reside. I judged that Reina supplied the initiative and daring and inspired these same in her companion. But why their parents should have permitted all this is more than I could understand. Careful questioning of Reina from time to time (her prospective historiographer, you see) elicited the information that her mother thought that when they went to Seattle or Spokane or Tacoma she stayed with Bertha's relatives, whereas Bertha in dealing with her own parents merely reversed this fabrication.

For something like a year and a half, which covered Reina's pre-nuptial contact with Sven, Bertha and Reina were almost always together. They went about with men, but according to Reina and in so far as she was concerned, not to do wrong but to get automobile rides, free dinners, trinkets and entertainment generally. For Bertha she made no claims. Often they were placed in perilous positions from which it took the greatest tact and craft to extricate themselves. The perils of Pauline were as nothing. The principal of these perils had arisen, as I soon saw, from the penchant of both for entering cars of youths who would then proceed to drive to some lone if not exactly forsaken spot where they would proceed to make advances which at least Reina, if one could believe her, was not willing to accept. Thus one night during a ride from Tacoma to Seattle in a taxi, a distance of thirty miles, they were attacked at a lonely point on the road by the chauffeur and a friend who had been brought along. The ruse by which they managed to escape would not bear publication, but the genuine perils of the situation would interest anyone. Once out of the car they ran through the darkness into the woods, where in the depths they were guided to a cottage by a lighted window. The chauffeur and his friend, in search of them, once passed within a foot of the place where they were crouching but did not actually stumble over them. Once having gained the cottage the girls remained there until morning and then proceeded to Seattle.

Because of Bertha's generosity and worship of her, as well as what she gained in entertainment and trinkets by the adventures, there was set up in Reina's mind, I think, the thought that life was an easy game, or should be, and that somebody,

somewhere, would always provide her with the comforts of existence as she conceived the same. Her interest in Sven, therefore, when he came upon the scene, was in part based on this philosophy. But so attractive was he to her that eventually he succeeded in interrupting and finally partially destroying this friendship with Bertha. Just the same, and even when I knew Reina some three years later, whenever things were not going to her taste it was to Bertha and the old gay days that she was always reverting or thinking of returning to. And it was Bertha whom Sven disliked and feared most of all, I think.

But as a study in *dolce far niente*, when she was about and planning though not as yet executing some new mischief, Reina was all that the picture required. When left alone she might sit for hours in a comfortable chair or before her sister's three-panel mirror, twiddling her thumbs or rearranging or clipping or tinting her hair, rouging her lips and cheeks, touching up her eyebrows and eyelids, and perfecting her facial toilet generally. Sometimes she would spend hours in trying on her sister's hats or dresses and looking at herself in a tall mirror and call to me or anyone to see. "Swell, eh?" or "Classy, what?" She would lie abed of a morning, regardless of what any or all others might be doing, but by late afternoon or night she would be up and ready for some form of entertainment, to be provided by Rhoda, Sven or myself. And sometimes, though not often, she would help Rhoda prepare dinner if she could find no easy way of getting out of it, but always making herself more of a hindrance than a help so as to warn against future requests.

As a rule, however, there were no dinners prepared here. The restaurants were far more interesting to Reina, as they were to Rhoda, for that matter; but it was always Reina who would suggest a restaurant whether she had a dime or not. What about so-and-so's? Didn't they have dancing there? And wasn't it considered "swell" or "chick"? Well, so oriented or directed by hints, I might take both. Whereupon dinner over, and although at the time neither she nor Sven had any money for such things, he having come to this new city solely because she had broken up his connection elsewhere, she would still suggest the theatre or a swimming

pool or a concert, and apparently with never a thought that expense might be a factor. Somebody had to pay, so why should she think? More, what were men for if not to pay? They had to have girls like her, didn't they? "Betcha life." In consequence, she would usually do her best to heighten the expense, although, to do her justice, she certainly added to my entertainment, thus embarrassing Sven, if not me, greatly, because he was unwilling to accept invitations unless he could at least pay his share. But that had nothing to do with Reina's calculations. She wanted to be entertained, and she was prepared to blink the sources of the supply as long as the entertainment was forthcoming.

All this by way of introduction. Once they were settled in Los Angeles—and, by the way, Rhoda's charming apartment caused Reina *instantly* to become openly dissatisfied with anything Sven could offer, and he had very little to offer just then—she made herself all but a permanent guest in her sister's home, and with scarcely so much as an invitation or a by-your-leave. For was not Rhoda her sister? And what are sisters for, pray? And Rhoda being one who attached almost much too much to blood kinship there was very little need of an invitation. Reina came and was lovingly and generously treated always, which was a mistake, as I saw it. For there was Sven, his difficulties and needs. And certainly Reina owed him something. Yet in spite of his needs and wishes and Reina's obligations as well as her own obvious lack of that perfection of beauty which made her sister so acceptable to the moving picture grandees about the various studios, still it was she, not Rhoda, who at once decided that she also was cut out for that work and her sister who generously supported her in her aspirations. And why not? Didn't men like her? Wasn't she as clever as anyone? Of course. Rhoda was earning from two to three hundred a week when she worked, sometimes more. Why couldn't she, Reina, also tap this golden dribble? The only things that stood between her and her goal were (1) Sven—her marital or household duties to him, which she never fulfilled anyhow, and (2) the various difficulties which Rhoda in her time had met and conquered. In short, like Rhoda, she would have to begin at the bottom as an extra, and that at seven-and-a-half a day—not forty and

fifty, as Rhoda now received. She would have to get up as early as six or seven and be at the studio, made up, not later than eight-thirty. She would have to provide her own clothes and make-up and show considerable interest in and enthusiasm for the work—all of which threw a heavy wet blanket over the original fires of her ambition.

For Reina was one for whom there was never any real, constructive effort. She was a parasite by nature, and for that affliction there seems to be no cure. Her mind was not constructive; there was apparently not a trace of anything in it anywhere which related to building anything, for herself or others. Things happened; they were not brought about by the efforts of anyone. Luck was the great thing, luck and gifts. Never was it to be expected that one seek to make anything come to pass via the humdrum process of labour. Never! Bunk! All was to be sunshine, blue seas, waving awnings, ice-cream, balcony dinners, automobile rides, clothes in the newest mode, dancing and cheerful friends. Anything less than this was an imposition on the part of either man or nature, but principally man. A man, if one is so gracious as to marry him, should provide all these things forthwith; otherwise he is a bonehead and worthless, solid ivory. If one has relatives of any means they should do as much; otherwise, why relatives? Such relatives owe it to all their kith and kin, but more especially to the one holding the above views, to provide him or her with joy and plenty. Reina held such views and was just like this, albeit she could be most agreeable so long as things were provided in sufficient quantity and to her taste.

Nevertheless and notwithstanding these traits, the moment she expressed the thought that she would like to enter upon this work her sister offered to take her about and introduce her to such directors and assistants as she knew, albeit she did talk to Reina of Sven, and how, unless she paid more attention to him, all this was most likely to end in marital destruction for both. Only Reina would never hear of Sven as an obstacle to anything. Not only that but now, as Rhoda also pointed out, such introductions to anyone really earnest to enter upon this film work should most certainly prove of the greatest help and Reina must be sure to take advantage of

them—make them count. Just the same, and apart from going with Rhoda on one or two mornings when she did not have to get up too early, this proffer was neglected. These extremely early hours were too much for her. Not only that, but and although she was previously instructed that she must be prepared to endure the slights and snubs and insults and rank overtures even of nearly all connected with the great film industry in any official capacity, from the sixth assistant doorman up, still the information did not take. She was told, for instance, that if any of the directors or actors or what-not were really interested, she might reasonably expect that they would attempt to ingratiate themselves by all sorts of unmeant promises, only Reina was not to listen. Rather she was to go on about her work—kidding them as much as possible, and if that failed and she really could not get rid of them or endure it, well . . . quit. Yet two visits made in this manner, and with but one or two side ventures of her own, and Reina was cured.

“What! Me fall fer them guys? And them makin’ me wait around all day before they’ll even letcha see anybody. Ya bet them guys ain’t goin’ to pull any of that raw stuff on me. An’ I told ’em who I was, too, an’ who sent me. Did that get me in? It did not. That little snit over at the Metro Studio gate just looked at me an’ wouldn’t even take my name. Said Mr. ——— was busy. An’ the same with that smart aleck over at Lasky. I never seen such freshies in all my life, anyhow.” And then came a long and pyrotechnic picture of what she would do to any of them if they really “got fresh” with her. They needn’t think that because they had some squeak connection with the movies they could put anything over on her. Far from it. Of course, now, if a man was a regular fella and conducted himself as such, coming up to a girl with respect and ingratiating himself maybe by an invitation to dinner or an automobile ride—well, if he looked all right, that might be different. Sometimes a guy like that might turn out to be all right. . . . I often sat and laughed and egged her on, just to be permitted to enjoy this ebullience; for that was what it was, sheer animal spirits and a crazy kind of imagination and zest for life running wild.

But one thing she did decide upon, and that the most

unreasonable, of course. Sven must get a place in Hollywood, where rents for small apartments furnished ranged from seventy-five for the poorest and smallest to two and three hundred and up for the better and more spacious ones. None the less, one of these for Sven, who, as I had gathered, had been rather hard-pressed by her vagaries in the past, and at this very moment, was for taking a smaller place down-town where rents were less and so shaping their lives to match his salary, which was then only forty a week or thereabouts. He was working as night-man in a garage until he could get something better. "You wanta remember, Reina," I heard him caution her within twenty-four hours after their arrival, "that we haven't any too much money now and we'll just have to go slow. We can't live in Hollywood on nothing." And so the place they were compelled to take was not to her taste. At the other extreme, really. Yet why couldn't Sven do better? Wasn't he a man, and hadn't she married him? She had caught a glimpse of Hollywood now, and regardless of means an immediate way must be found to stay there or there would be few sweet smiles for him.

Sven not being able to do better at the time, and she being in no way concerned to add to the exchequer, she took out her pique in loafing about her sister's place in Hollywood, while the latter worked and worked hard. Also nightly, while Reina slept, Sven cleaned and repaired cars and looked after the garage, which was never closed. This meant that he had to sleep by day. But instead of that arousing a proper sympathy for one so industrious it seemed to irritate Reina because of what she considered either his dullness or his stubbornness. Why couldn't he get a day job, anyhow? What was the use of any man working at night when there was day work to be had somewhere? He needn't work in a garage; he understood other things. Besides, if he didn't, he ought to. In vain did the industrious and really handsome Sven point out that because of the low state of their finances he had to take what he could get at the moment. She did not like that. Time was the essence of her contract with him. He must hurry and do better by her. Debarred from such comfort as Rhoda enjoyed, she felt outraged. Besides, at night, just when they might go out for a little fun, Sven had to go to

work. And in the morning when she wanted to sleep late, in he came fresh from his work and waking her up. The fact that he was considerate enough to breakfast before he came home was nothing to the point. He chose to work at night instead of during the day, and for little enough at that. He should look about and get something that paid more. One thing he pointed out to Rhoda not long after they arrived was the fact that it was because of Reina that he had to take the work and small salary they were now living upon. She would not stay where he had been able to make big money, not even long enough for him to get a real start and go into business for himself, which was his great hope.

The upshot of this was that Rhoda, sympathizing with Reina on the ground that she was young and hungry for life and had never really had anything, and yet sympathizing with Sven quite as much, was anxious to see them comfortable and hence was full of helpful suggestions. Reina ought to be more considerate of Sven. Sven ought to get day work if he could. It wasn't right to leave her all alone at night. To make things a little easier for them she first gave Reina a hundred dollars or so for her own use and then offered to lend Sven something to go on in case he would drop what he was doing and look for day work or find an interest in some lumber concern, which same he was fully competent to manage. Also she suggested that he get better rooms, even if she had to make up the difference. And if he found the right sort of company in which to invest she would lend him the money to make the investment. When he got on his feet he was to get a car so that they could see something of the world in which they had so summarily injected themselves.

Sven, being the sort of youth he was, was all honest gratitude and anxious to make the most of this windfall. Forthwith he proceeded to spend most of his daytime sleeping hours in looking up one and another of the many advertised opportunities. Eventually he uncovered one in which, for the sum of one thousand cash invested and the sale of a certain number of shares that must be sold and the taking over of a number for himself, to be paid for piecemeal, he was to receive the title and assume the duties of secretary of a lumber company. He was to have a polished oak desk with his name on it, as well

as his name on the door. Also a salary of sixty-five dollars, to begin at once. Rhoda approving when all this was duly laid before her, he proceeded to close the deal and to carry out the details of his part of the contract. Needless to say, Sven being cautious and careful and rather clever when it came to things of this sort, he was soon well along on the path toward a moderate competence. At once he began planning the construction of a number of small houses, to be sold for three thousand and which were to net him or his company nearly one thousand. He and Rhoda were to make real money in the future. She would never regret having aided him. And I am sure that he meant all he said.

But I wish you might have seen Reina once these plans had passed the tentative stage and bid fair to come about, or after Sven had actually assumed his duties as secretary and they had moved to three rooms farther out, where there were flowers and a lawn and a better view. The airs ! The assurance and swelling superiority ! Sven was now the secretary and part owner of a lumber company. And they were living in a three-room apartment with a balcony on the borders of Hollywood. And they had a small car, a second-hand something, but not bad-looking, for Sven was a judge of bargains in that field. Yet instead of interesting herself in Sven and what he was doing, she was now most interested to know what they could do in order to entertain themselves. At once, of course, they must motor to Santa Barbara, ditto to Big Bear, ditto to Riverside, ditto to San Francisco, ditto to Bakersfield. And wouldn't it be fine if they had a piano—or a new victrola, anyhow—and Rhoda would come and bring some of her friends and they could dance, etc. etc. etc. Everything, as you see, for Reina ; very little for Sven. And yet I doubt if I ever saw a happier young man, for a while, anyhow. By Reina's own admission he was up early and back late, following closely the possibilities that were now before him. Within the space of a very few weeks he had been able to dispose of a large number of shares of stock. Also he was able to handle quite all the details of shipment and delivery, while others sold the lumber ordered from northern firms. His one mistake, if it was a mistake, was his desire to clear off too quickly the cost price of the shares allotted him so that by the next year he



and Reina might have plenty to live on. His mistake, if any, was in thinking that Reina might be persuaded or prompted whole-heartedly to help him do this.

Most assuredly that dream was not well-founded. I never saw a young wife do less for an ambitious husband and expect more. The garish moving picture atmosphere of Hollywood, as well as the summery sweet-to-do-nothing mood of Los Angeles as a whole, seemed to get into her veins and make her absolutely intolerant of anything save idleness and pleasure. Her main interest was to parade the smart shops, near which she lived, or to linger at her sister's in Hollywood, where, when she was not meditating or planning outings or decorating her face before a mirror, she would sit at the piano and in an ultra and hence amusingly romantic voice give vent to exaggerations of the sentiment in *Dear Old Pal of Mine*, *Old Pal*, *Why Don't You Answer Me ?*, *Avalon*, *Macushla*, and such other romanticisms. And from here, with her sister and occasionally myself as pilots, and while her husband worked, she would joyously set forth to a swimming pool, a horseback ride, a beach restaurant or an automobile ride, yet without a thought of including her young husband, and even at times resenting, by a gesture or a mouth, the mere mention of him, as though he were nothing at all in her young life. When taxed with this, as well as her whole attitude toward Sven and marriage, she denied it. At first she denied being indifferent to him, then later charged him with being unnecessarily grouchy wherever she was concerned ; too set on a humdrum existence. He wanted to work all the time and never play. Why, instead, couldn't he work, and give her all she wanted and play, too ? Finally she admitted that she might be changing or that he had changed. He wasn't as light-hearted as he used to be. He seemed to think there was nothing in the world to do except work. He was stingy and didn't seem to think she needed to do anything but wait for him. When I pointed out that he seemed to be making a gallant fight for a place, and under trying conditions, she paid a genuine tribute to his industry and rather blamed herself. She "guessed" she wasn't cut out for marriage, anyhow, that she just couldn't stand humdrum things. Sometimes she did like Sven very much, was even crazy about him ; at other times she felt as though she hated him. He

could be so nasty. Once they had quarrelled and he had threatened to strike her, or had struck her, and she had flung something at him and had cut his eye. Another time he had struck her after they had quarrelled about her having gone to a place she had promised not to go to. Just now he wanted her to live just so until he got on his feet, and she didn't want to live that way.

The pointlessness of the outsider mingling in the affectional affairs of those unhappily mated is too obvious to need comment here. I ventured no advice and made no pleas, and I was not greatly surprised when, one morning, Reina arrived at her sister's apartment with the announcement that she and Sven were "through"—that she wasn't going to stay with that old grouch any longer. Rather she would pawn her rings and return to Spokane where her mother now lived and where, in company with Bertha, she was certain to find something to do. Her underlying thought, as I suspected at the time, was that Rhoda would not let her go. And she was right. Rhoda suggested that she come there first for a few days, or go to an hotel and pretend that she had left for the north and see what Sven would do. Reina was to write a letter and have it mailed in San Francisco, saying she was on her way north. A little money was given her to stay at a nearby hotel. In the meantime Sven had returned home and found a letter such as only Reina could write, a most amazing affair, concocted in Rhoda's presence, which told him that she had gone and would not return. She had taken all her things. He need not bother Rhoda, for she was not going to Rhoda. But it seemed to me that Sven was very much put upon and that Reina did not know what she wanted.

Nevertheless, Sven did bother Rhoda, and at once. He was in many ways a simple and confiding person and did not at all understand the woman he had married. Yet in spite of all her fantastic notions and her marked indifference to his well-being, he still cared for her, as anyone could see—that silly, notional girl. It was enough to cause one to wag one's head in desperation.

Sven called that evening to see if Rhoda knew where Reina was. His hope, written in his eyes, was that she was there. In a straightforward way he proceeded to place before Rhoda

the sum and substance of his wrongs. He loved Reina and always had and always would, he thought, but she knew the state of his finances. She knew how hard he had tried before coming to Los Angeles and why he hadn't got along better than he had. Every time he was just getting a start somewhere she would get dissatisfied and leave him, and here was the same thing again. He was just getting a new start, and now she had left him again. The big thing now was to get his stock paid for so that the interest it yielded should be paid him instead of being charged off against his debts. The trouble was that he had been trying to make his salary of sixty-five dollars pay all expenses, but that wasn't enough, it seemed. Reina was for spending all he made the moment he made it, and even more, while he was for saving it in case anything happened.

Personally I felt sorry for him. More, I respected him, and so did Rhoda, and to my intense satisfaction she saw the point and sympathized with him. Although the blood-tie pulled strongly she wanted Sven to be helped and she wanted Reina to help him. She was for a compromise in some form, and so she and Sven, and she and Reina, entered upon long and tautological discussions. The substance of all this was that Sven should not throw up his place. Also that with her aid he might do just a little better by Reina in the matter of living, assuming that she came back. She had never had anything in her life and he knew how that was to a girl. And she was here in Hollywood, where there were many things to make her envious and unhappy. Couldn't he afford to get a still better place? Sven was fond of Rhoda and admired her common sense as well as her beauty, besides being very grateful to her. He promised that if Reina would come back and be nicer to him he would do better too. He would get a larger place and a better car. He had seen one, a Buick, which he could get on time for two thousand dollars, and then he and Reina could go about more. Perhaps he hadn't done as well as he should, but he had been trying to get a start so that both of them could have a better time later on. Sven left, full of hope for the future, though Rhoda still maintained that she did not know where Reina was.

He was scarcely gone, however, when in walked Reina, anxious to know what he had proposed to do. She was full

of bravado until she saw how Rhoda felt about it. Her one thought seemed to be that so long as Sven was amenable she could use him about as one would a door-mat. "I'll show him he can't treat me any old way," she began. "He needn't think he can treat me as though I wasn't deserving of nothing"—("Anything, Reina!")—"Well, then, anything. Nasty old rooms down there! An' eating in cafeterias! I won't do it. He's makin' money now, an' he can just spend a little of it. He needn't think I'm goin' to live on nothin' all my life."

But since Rhoda inclined toward Sven in this argument and Reina really depended on her, a compromise had to be reached; otherwise Reina would have had to carry out her threat to leave Hollywood, which was exactly what she did not want to do. After some bluff and bluster, in which she sought to make it appear that she had really gone to San Francisco but owing to the plea of Rhoda had returned to Los Angeles, she did return to Sven, who proceeded to do his best to make things more agreeable for her. They then celebrated their reunion by a dinner to Rhoda, at which they made quite a picture of loving domesticity.

But once the interest of the new place had subsided a bit Reina was to be found most of the time in the apartment in Hollywood, dreaming as before. While Rhoda worked and schemed hourly as to how to advance herself, haunting the studios and practising dancing, *delsarte*, elocution, make-up and characterization, Reina was dreaming or playing the piano or waiting for her to return so that they might go somewhere. I often wondered what Sven was thinking of it all. To be sure, Rhoda, anxious for the welfare of the twain, did her best to iron out the rough places. Whenever possible she was for having Sven to the apartment for dinner and for a drive in her car, or to distant resorts over the week-ends, even though Sven objected most definitely to accepting that for which he could make no adequate return.

It was plain that in spite of what Reina thought Sven ought to do for her, and what he lacked in the way of ability to provide, and what she was entitled to as his wife, she still made no great effort to fulfil her part of the marital relation. She was much interested by the admiration of other men and what wealth in the hands of another male might do for her, in case she

chose to command the same. There were nights when Sven was detained at the office and on such occasion, if Rhoda was free from her work, Reina was for persuading her to go somewhere, usually to a swimming pool, where by reason of the large crowds that attended and the attractive bathing suit she wore it was possible to attract no little attention. Once there it would not be long before she could be seen flirting with some good-looking youth or man, making the most of her golden opportunities and her figure, which was far from unattractive. And unless Rhoda protested she might even disappear for an hour or two, to loaf in some nearby restaurant or ice-cream parlour, while her sister waited. Rhoda was not inclined to quarrel with her on this account; she had the feeling that Reina might be deciding that she had made a mistake and was looking for an easy way out. But, as time proved, it did make a difference in her estimate of Reina. I think she felt that Reina was temperamentally unfitted for marriage with anyone.

Nevertheless, because of Rhoda more than anything else, I believe, her charming surroundings and possessions, her standing in the film world, and the fact that she had helped him make his latest beginning, Sven stood his ground for a time, or, rather, endured the slights that were so persistently put upon him. But after a time and when the worm had endured all it could, it turned. Late one Saturday night there was a terrific storm in the Bergstrom household, and that very night Reina appeared at her sister's abode, much the worse nervously for the argument. "Whadaya know?" Sven had quarrelled with her for coming in late, even when he was working late himself, and had told her—well, needless to say what he had told her. But among other things he had said that unless there was a change, and a drastic one, he was through. She could go where she chose, and he would go his way. He was tired of being made a fool of. He would get a divorce, or she could get it. He wouldn't contest it. But unless she there and then made definite promises of reform which she intended to keep, she must leave or he would. . . . With all her memories of past victories fresh upon her, flights and reunions, there was but one thing that Reina could do: flee, of course, to let him see once more whether he could do

without her. She had learned that he could not. He would follow and bring her back.

But this time there was no agitated and nervous Sven telephoning to know whether she was there. Complete silence in that quarter ; and on the part of Rhoda dissatisfaction and a growing contempt ; and on the part of Reina, for the time being anyhow, excited cackling. Sven had said this, and Sven had said that, and he had done or had not done thus and so. I marvelled that anyone could have so poor a grasp of the human amenities as to think and act as she was thinking and acting and then blame another person. Fortunately the attitude of Rhoda was different now. Blood-ties or no blood-ties, she had come to see that there was something to Sven's side of the story.

Rhoda did not press this conclusion just then, but after a few days, in which Reina lay about waiting for the surrender of Sven, she began to take up the matter of her future with her. Either she must think of something she would like to do and be about the business of doing it, or she must return to her mother. Everybody worked ; why not she ? " You mustn't think that because I'm your sister," went on Rhoda, " and because I'm fond of you I can take care of you always. I can't, and I wouldn't if I could. I don't think it would be a good thing for you. You're old enough now to decide what it is you want to do. If you don't want to live with Sven you ought to decide what kind of work you can do and make a try for it. I am willing to help you get work, but I do feel that you ought to do something and not expect to idle about and do nothing while you wait to see what Sven is going to do."

Reina declared vehemently that she was not waiting for Sven and that nothing would induce her to return. She was going north. She had written to Bertha and to her mother. Nevertheless she sat about, and still no Sven. And still Rhoda bore with her as patiently as one person could with another. She waited almost a week before she again pointed out the folly of waiting for a man who was evidently not interested to pursue. She had not treated him well and could not expect him to run after her. She must find work or arrange in some way that he do something for her, which she assumed he might do, at least until Reina could do something for herself.

But then, to my astonishment, after this conduct and her indifference in the past and her various threats, the moment Rhoda had gone I heard her calling up the North and South Lumber Company and asking if she might speak with one Sven Bergstrom. He was not in, but without caring what I might be thinking, since I was within earshot, she tried and tried, until finally she did catch him. The burden of her message, once she had him, was that she wanted to see him, but by no means was this so directly conveyed. On the contrary, and apparently in the face of small encouragement from him, after endless roundabout hints, she was compelled to say that she was going to be down-town about six o'clock and that if he happened to be near where she was going to be she would be glad to see him. After this telephone conversation was over I began to rally her concerning her previous determination and all the things she had seemed to think were wrong with him. Her calm reply was that she still thought as she had but that she needed some money and he must supply it. He wasn't going to get off so easy, you bet. The very least he could do was to give her enough to live on until she found something to do.

If I were to devote one hundred pages to verbatim transcripts of subsequent conversations held between her and Sven, and which same she invariably forced upon him and all of which he appeared to wish to avoid, you would gather but faintly the strangely illusive and illogical and almost pointless processes of her reasoning. Her persistent statement was that at bottom she did not care for Sven and that she did not want to live with him, but that she did want some money and proposed to get it if she had to sue him for divorce. But her conversations with him would have convinced anyone that at bottom she really did care for him and that she was lying roundly when she said she did not. Her voice and even her manner over the telephone, as I now noted with astonishment, had a cooing, coaxing, pleading quality, which she seemed to think would have some effect on Sven. Yet even then or immediately afterwards she would assure me that she hated him. Also she would openly flirt with men who appeared to be drawn to her and who would follow her in their cars and solicit her company from time to time. And betimes, and much to her sister's

chagrin, she would be let off at her sister's door by some individual in a most impressive turn-out, and with whom she chose to linger and talk. The quarrels which followed some of these adventures between her and Rhoda were quite sharp enough to indicate a change in Rhoda. Finally, after she had gone to her husband's office one evening and stayed away the entire night, she was ordered out by Rhoda, who did not understand until Reina herself explained that it was with Sven she had been and that Rhoda could call up and find out, which was done. After that she was readmitted, but only after stating that she cared for Sven and was going back.

And she did return to him—because it was the easiest thing to do, I presume. And he, if you will believe it, seemed delighted to have her back. Yes—so it was. And soon there was a new and still better apartment and a better automobile. Indeed, there was something helplessly compulsory about many things that both of them did, as though in spite of his best or worst sense and hers each found it impossible to break with the other, the matter of a little support not really being at the bottom of it. She wanted to rule him, I think, and found it hard to believe that she could not. And he was getting to the place where he did not want to be ruled, yet could not quite break with her.

But then of a sudden came the end of all of this. For one day, about a week before their final separation, there was an accident. The new car in which Reina had posed, calling at least once or twice a day to show off, was crashed into by a street car and put out of commission. It was so badly damaged that not less than four hundred dollars was required to restore it, and about four weeks must elapse before they could have it again. Worse, a smaller and cheaper car had now to be used, Sven having sunk all his spare cash in this larger one. Not only that, but a legal contest would also have to be entered upon before any claim would be awarded, because the accident, as it turned out, was as much Sven's fault as the motorman's. This Sven himself admitted but gave as his excuse that he was worried and brooding at the time. Worse still, the car had been only partly insured, Sven having been too busy to have that matter properly attended to. And so Reina, much to her dissatisfaction, was reduced once more to a very commonplace car.



Whether this had anything to do with the final catastrophe I have often wondered. One thing is sure : Reina became most irritable in her manner toward Sven, claiming that he had not managed things right or the accident would not have happened. Also that she would not ride or live as she was now being compelled to. Yet Sven, as I noticed, was courteous and considerate and even apologetic at times. To me he seemed a little sad as he explained how it had all come about. He was thinking of something and had absent-mindedly swung in front of a car which was coming too fast to stop. That frank admission, even among friends, infuriated Reina. It seemed "crazy" to her. She wanted him to deny all responsibility and sue the company, as well as to play injured and exact damages on that score. But Sven would do none of that, and went about his business as before.

And then one day he telephoned her that he would not be home before eleven or twelve that night. Curiously enough, instead of running to Rhoda's as usual, she decided to retire and read. But midnight came, and no Sven. In the morning, surprised and concerned at his absence, she called up the office and learned that he was not there, that he had left at five-thirty the day before. Further waiting and searching revealing nothing, she ran to Rhoda. But Sven was really gone. His business affairs appeared to be in good order, except that as time went on it developed that he had recently contracted a number of debts via loans and expenditures for things bought on time—the car, furniture, dresses and jewellery for Reina. The loans were against his salary and the stock in his possession but not yet paid for. Also certain cash sales of stock had not been accounted for. But, strangely enough, the other officers of the company did not seem much concerned, wishing only, as they said to Rhoda who went to see them, that he would come back. He was too good a man to lose. They explained that Sven had seemed troubled recently. Also that they feared that it might be about a woman. A woman had been seen entering his office at night. This sent Reina off on a wild-goose chase, but the mysterious woman of whom she was instantly insanely jealous proved to be herself.

Followed such mental vagaries and variations on the part of Reina as set one casual observer, myself, no less, to whirling

mentally like a pinwheel. Realizing, as time went on, that by her follies and indifference she had driven from her a man who was of some commercial ability and that she was now left high and dry without a penny, Reina appeared to be shuttled between fear and rage, a desire to weep, I think, and a desire for revenge ; between the thought that Sven had not considered her worth even a good-bye, and the thought that she had miscalculated her hold over him. Another irritating and enraging thought appeared to be that Rhoda and I, and perhaps particularly I, looked upon her as fairly paid out for her airs and indifferences. At first she was inclined to think that an accident might have happened to Sven. But opposed to this was the fact that he had called her up so soon before disappearing. Also that on the day of his disappearance he had reassigned to the rightful owner not only the damaged car, which was partially paid for, but the smaller car that had been loaned him. Also his small bank account had been cancelled, which proved that he had really left her. His indifference to her last departure might have warned her that a change was impending if not actually at hand.

Came now a period of brooding and mooding, coupled with such curious developments as would tax an alienist to display, the sort of thing that happens in real life and seldom if ever creeps into romance. In connection with an hysterical after search there appeared upon the scene a detective who fell in love with her, a queer, showy, self-opinionated dandy connected with the office of the district attorney. His chief desire seemed to be to prove Sven a criminal, not that he should be punished but that he should not venture to return to Reina. And Reina, being in need of money, was inclined to make use of this sleuth, not to the extent of favouring him in any way but in order to have the use of his car, some cash, luncheons and dinners, while she followed up clues. But all the while she was amusingly critical of him, declaring that she would throw him over when she was through with him and expose him to his superiors if he proved obstreperous. Betimes she would play doleful melodies on the piano and seem lost in sad thoughts. Again, she would break forth into loud denunciations of her absent spouse. But she also must have realized that her attitude and her extravagance had driven him away

and that she was the cause of his petty defalcations, if defalcations they might be called. The company, when appealed to by the detective, refused to make any charge.

Following the day when she finally abandoned Mr. Morello, the detective, bidding him begone and not annoy her any more, she was at a loss what next to do, for some form of employment was looming straight ahead, as troublesome a promontory as she ever wished to see, you may be sure. But while she meditated, her sister was working, and this now began to weigh upon her. All at once and in spite of various kindly overtures on the part of Rhoda she decided to transfer herself and effects to a room in the very heart of the city, where henceforth, as she said, she would live. Also she was going to get something to do, "You bet," the very first thing that came to hand. She wasn't going to hang around trying to get into the movies. It was too uncertain. So one day, in spite of an invitation to stay longer, she left and thereafter was seen only at such times as Rhoda besought her, which was often. But she did take the first work that offered, that of elevator starter in an office building.

And then soon and much to my amusement we began to hear of new friendships with girls who were so far below the walk to which her sister aspired as to be disturbing, but who were no doubt suited to the mind and mood of Reina at the time. These same were of that ignorant if not inexperienced flapper type which looks upon sex and the conquest of men as the end and beginning of all earthly interest. Yet I was never fully convinced that Reina was very much fascinated by them or their lives. Living among these girls now, however, and in order, possibly, to avoid boredom, she busied herself with them and their affairs for a time and seemed to be more at peace than before. Returning to her sister, betimes, she was constantly describing them as a sex-crazy "bunch" and their male friends as snipes with tin Lizzies, bootleg whisky and a little money. But sometimes even they appeared to bore her and she would appear at Rhoda's apartment with the thought written all over her that she would prefer to stay there, and yet refusing when she was asked. Yet as time wore on she seemed less determined to show Rhoda that she could make her own way in the world, and more determined to be friends

with her ; also her rage against her late husband subsided and there were times when she would speak of him and admit that she had made mistakes. "The trouble with me was," she once said simply and forcefully to me as she sat in Rhoda's boudoir and made a facial toilet with her sister's cosmetics, "I didn't know when I was well off. Sven wasn't such a bad fella. There's lots worse'n him, ya bet, an' I see it now."

"Oh," I laughed, "you see Sven in a new light now, do you ?"

"Ya bet I do," was her frank admission. "Sven wasn't so bad. He was a little stingy but he was a hustler, all right, an' he woulda made money up there in Washington if I'd only helped him. An' it was the same with that garage business he had up there in Seattle. But I guess I musta been a fool then. Nothing ever seemed to satisfy me. I just couldn't bear the idea of stayin' in one place long. When I heard that Rhoda was doin' so well down here I just made up my mind to get Sven to come down here. An' of course I did."

"So you think you could get along with him now, do you ?"

"Sure. I thought a whole lotta Sven. I was crazy about him once up there in Seattle, sometimes even after we got down here. But I got to wantin' too much, I guess, an' he was too easy with me. He'd never stand up an' fight. He'd rather go an' get me things when he couldn't afford 'em."

I looked at her, too pleased by this frank confession to wish to add anything. At last, as I said to myself at the time, she did see the point even if too late. But Sven had disappeared by then, and so far as I ever learned he never returned.

But in spite of this resurrected affection she went on in her rag-bag way, seeking to make the most of her possibilities. One day she confessed to me that if she ever met another "fella" as sober and industrious and ambitious as Sven she would "nab" him, you bet. "An' ya bet I'll know how to act the next time. I've learned sompin." The thought that she ought to sober down somewhat as well as marry again had apparently taken root in her decidedly flighty brain, or at least that she ought to attach herself in some way to some man with money or the ability to make it. And so she now began to hint to her sister that she be introduced to someone of character and standing, which same was not to be thought of, of course. A

few *we was's* and *he done's* would most certainly have frightened off the most tolerant of possibilities. When she saw that Rhoda would have none of her commonplace friends and that she was in no haste to introduce her to the personalities with whom she was in contact, Reina began to set her cap on her own account for such as she thought might prove of the right calibre.

"Say," she appealed to me once, "tell me the name of a book that a fella that knows sompin would think was all right, will ya? I wanta carry sompin that'll make 'em think I know more'n I do. How's that, eh?" and she laughed. She could muster a grin that would melt ice, and it was that and her honest frankness about everything which attracted so many to her, myself among them.

"You're on," I said, reaching for *The Way of All Flesh*, the best on my shelf at the time.

"D'ya think this would make a fella that knows a lot think that I was up on good books?" she queried.

"Well, if that won't do, nothing will. It depends on how you talk about it, Reina. Unless you understand it you'd better not say too much, see?"

"Leave it to me to put over the wise stuff. I ain't givin' myself away. I'll read it first, see, an' what I don't understand I'll ask about." Once more that toothy grin. It was at such times that she became worth knowing, really charming.

For about a year thereafter, in which she worked first as an elevator starter, next as a telephone girl in charge of a switchboard (because "Startin' elevators is kinda common, dontcha think?") and finally as a clerk in a photographer's studio, because that was higher still, she was alive with stories of her adventures. For some reason—because of Rhoda, perhaps—she was determined to interest a man above the average, someone more interesting than Sven even, with whom she could be seen without having her friends think she was belittling herself; rather, with the thought that she was doing exceedingly well. Now it would be: "Gee, ya oughta seen the swell fella I met goin' over to Catalina last Saturday, me an' Marie. Oh, a swell guy! None of yer little snipes with their tin cars an' their talk of bootleg an' all that stuff. This was a real guy—big grey overcoat an' horn glasses an' a Paige

turin' car with a California top. I saw him leave it at the garage before he come on. An' he was readin' a book—not then, ya know—he was just tellin' me about it. Didja ever hear of a book called *Divine Comedy*, or sompin like that? It's a novel, ain't it?"

"That's right, Reina. It's a novel."

"What's the name of the guy that wrote it—Danty?"

"Right again, Reina. He's a well-known writer. Henry A. Danty. You'll find his books in every library. He's one of our most popular authors. Everybody reads him. Why, they've done a lot of his stuff in the movies."

"Is that right? Ye're not kiddin' me, are ya?"

"Not for worlds. Ask any librarian. Henry A. Danty, author of *The Divine Comedy*."

"That's it—that's the one. He was tellin' me about that one. People dead an' in hell, see, an' devils torturin' 'em. Gee, it was interestin'. He was tellin' me about a fella that was dead an' was"—and here followed her version of the agonies of Francesca and Paolo, because of their illicit earthly love, for ever whirled in their Stygian tempest.

Yet again, it was another worthy citizen in tweed and raglan riding to his office of a rainy morning—"Oh, a swell fella. An' whadaya know, he's the general freight agent for one of these big steamship lines that runs between here an' South America. An' he was awful nice to me, too, ya bet. Wanted to know where I lived an' what I did—gee, an awful nice man. An' me an' him"—("He and I, Reina")—"well, he an' I, then, got to talking about the boats an' what they carry—coffee an' hides an' wool an' sugar—oh, lotsa things. An' he was tellin' me how they bring coffee an' hides an' wool down over the mountains there in little pack-trains made up of them there—ah—burros. An' how little them Indians get. Gee, it was interestin', I wanta tell ya."

"I haven't any doubt of it. I wish I could meet him myself."

"Well, anyhow, I had that last book ya gimme, see? That was the way it started. He kep' lookin' at that, an' I kep' twistin' it around so as to be sure he seen what it was"—("Saw, Reina")—"well, saw, then. An' when we got down-town he ast me if he could come around an' see me some time

an' take me out to dinner. Said he thought I was a nice girl, see, an' all that bunk. But I liked him, all right. A nice, big, serious fella he was—big nice eyes. Them kind's different from the little snipes that are always chasin' after ya an' haven't got a bean. I'm offa that bunch fer life. A guy like that can learn ya sompin'—"Teach, Reina"—"well, teach, then."

But I might present as many as thirty such casual encounters that came to nothing apparently, and still not exhaust the roster. Reina was "nuts," as she said, to find some man who really amounted to something. And at last she did find a man of at least some ability, as I judged, "a—now—one of these here—now—efficiency experts—is that it?" According to Reina, he was fifty years of age and connected with an organization which sought to make over or improve technically and financially such firms as were not doing as well in the matter of economy and waste prevention as might be. I saw him but once, and that in passing, a solid, contentious-looking person whose self-centred and defiant mien impressed me as more likely to drive off rather than encourage intimacies of a social or affectional nature. Yet Reina became friendly with him and in the course of time was to be seen seated at the wheel of the very elaborate car which she said was his. Beside her at times sat the master himself, in grey summer suit and cap, looking quite commercial and prosperous. Later this friendship appeared to have been cemented by a number of very solid and substantial gifts—a pair of jade ear-rings, a genuine grey squirrel coat, several throws with caps to match, shoes, lingerie, gloves and—but my memory fails me. At any rate, she was suddenly most fulsomely and yet not too loudly outfitted with many of the things she had been craving this long while.

And then one day, reclining in this same car and looking the picture of grandeur, she came to Hollywood to announce that she was all but ready to depart on a tour of the Selkirks in North-Western Canada—Lake Louise, Banff, the totem-villages, etc. "An' not only that," she went on, "but looka here," and she proceeded to fell me by bringing forth a very fat purse from which she extracted a small thin roll of fifty and one hundred dollar bills. "An' what's more, he's crazy about me. He says if I'll go to school an' polish up my grammar

I'll be just as smart as anybody. An' I'm a-goin' to, too. I'm not always goin' to stick around here and be a dub, ya bet. I know sompin already, an' ya just give me a year or two more an' I'll know a lot more. Anyhow, I got this much—pretty good, eh ? ”

“ You said it, Reina. You're the candy girl, all right. They can't keep a good man down, can they ? ”

“ Ya betcha life they can't. An' I'm a-goin' to save my money from now on an' behave myself an' marry a real man, an' maybe in a few years I'll be somebody.”

“ That's the way to talk. But it looks to me as though you were somebody already. It isn't everybody that can go to Banff and Lake Louise in July.”

“ I'll tell the world ! ”

There was little that Rhoda could say or do. Her attitude toward Reina is best expressed by a speech often despairingly made after some such scene as this : “ Well, I can't help it, can I ? I've done all I can do. She's my sister and I can't help being fond of her, but I'm not responsible for her. She won't listen to me, and she never gets any of the points I try to make. She'll just have to live her own life, that's all. I'm sorry for her, but neither Sven nor mamma could do anything, either.”

But to return to this scene. Rhoda had remained silent while Reina swaggered and talked, and now Reina turned to her :

“ What's the matter ? Don't ya think it's pretty good—all these nice clothes an' this trip an' everything ? ”

“ Why, yes, I suppose so, if you want to go and really like him,” commented Rhoda rather heavily. “ And I hope he really likes you and that it won't be just another of these silly adventures that you'll be sorry for afterwards. You might meet someone some day that you'll really care for, you know.”

“ Oh, I know. But I like him, all right. An' he said he never knew anybody that interested him as much as me. An' he's going to send me to school, too, to a seminary somewhere, see ? Won't that be pretty good ? ”

“ Cemetery, Reina, cemetery,” I put in.

“ Oh, now, ya hush. Guess I know, don't I ? ” Then with a burst of pent-up emotion and affection, genuine and



unchanging for all her rag-bag thoughts, she stepped forward and, throwing her arms about Rhoda, kissed her good-bye. Even tears—a short shower. “An’ I owe it all to you, Rhoda. Don’t say I don’t, ’cause I do. You’ve always been good to me. If it hadn’t been fer you I never woulda come down here at all, an’ I wouldn’ta got what I’ve got now.” A few more tears. Then one last funny story. A burst of laughter. And then departure, with Rhoda gazing after her more astonished than ever. And myself, wondering where, in the long catalogue of the exceptions, she belonged. And at last deciding : on the Orpheum Circuit. Or in a farce.

But Rhoda . . . I turned to her. She was crying.

“Forget it,” was all I could advise. “You can’t help it, can you? She is as she is, isn’t she? And if you’re going to begin to cry over life you’ll be crying all the time. Besides, you’ll ruin your make-up.” But it was already ruined.

To return to Reina. One day about six weeks before her departure she and a friend had appeared at Rhoda’s apartment in search of something she had left behind. Rummaging in a box which contained some letters written by Sven to her and her to Sven she came upon one and stopped to expatiate to her friend about the quarrels she and Sven had had and how she had left him three or four times and he had always followed. Then and in my presence she had asked her friend to read a particular letter, which she had written to Sven during one of their separations. The friend reporting that she thought it “swell,” Reina volunteered : “Well, I thought it was, myself. But I didn’t send it, because afterwards I thought maybe I didn’t mean it. But I coulda. Sven always fell for anything like that. That’s why I wrote it.”

Interested in this palaver and seeing her toss the letter back in the box, I said : “Aren’t you going to take it along, Reina ?”

“Sure not. It ain’t no good to me now.”

“But I thought you said you cared for Sven ?”

“Well, I did—a little. Still I didn’t send it. Read it an’ throw it in the waste-basket when ye’re through with it. It’ll make ya laugh, but I thought I meant it when I wrote it.”

Thinking later of its possibly illuminating character, I recovered it from the waste-box where she had thrown it, and here it is :

DEAR SVEN :

As this has been such a wonderful night and I have stayed up late enjoying it I thought of you. Sven, it seems as though our 2 years of married life is a complete failure. Its too bad but you have tried and I have tried but its gone, what our real love for each other, and no living person can be happy if love aint there can they. I know many times you think I was all to blame but Sven you can understand why I was cross and eritabel.

The last time we went back together was because I wasnt real sure I didnt care for you and my longing to be with you I couldnt understand, it was miserabel I had to have you. But now I know what I was lonesome for the Happy you use to be but I couldnt find him and I was sorry and couldnt live without you.

I know I am a disappointment in your life and Sven its for the best even if a married duty calls one he or she cant respond if there true self wont let them.

At one time in our life together no woman could have been happier than me. I simply was wild with your love and never could such a thing as this happen. I feel sure you was the same but life acts queer sometimes. I never doubted you Sven in my life till you begun to hide things from me and lye once inawhile. But its one thing or another you have developed a different plain in life than I. or its that we are dissatisfied in one another neather of us have had a chance and now that yours has come I am still looking for mine.

Why can a person make another suffer so unless its hate or thoughtlessness. I always have tryed to make myself nasty when I was aking inside for you to be near me and for the kisses Ill never forget. Still I would rather live alone and cherish the love I had once than ever go back again and be dissappointed like we always have been. I know its hard on you too dont think Sven I have no heart at all altho it looks that way sometimes I feel for you and would help you gladly if I could I understand you better than you really know and one must be helpful to you to be appreshiated still thats alright every one expects that even me.

Im so glad your work is helping you make a big success and there is no reason why you shouldnt be way up in this world other men have made it self made and honest thats what I am hoping for you.

And now that your free of a married life and no its for the best theres no reason why you aint bound for the top. we are young yet and you may find some one would mean all the world to you then its time to think back we was right to quit and let our love find its mate.

So Sven please look at this thing the way I do and we will go on thru life just the same as we did before we met feeling there is someone who will care for everything we do.

Tell your folks Sven when you go home just how it was and that I always thought of them as my mother and father and wish them sinseer regards I am sure they wont condemn me at least I always feel they wont.

So I am sure Sven all the unhappy hours you put in with me will be forgot and Ill do the same starting a new sheet from today on. A divorce will be got as soon as I can save up the money we will erace the 2 years off our life and start at the beginning again.

I had to write and get this problem off my mind its been hard but solved.

So good Bye Sven its my last to you. please forgive and forget knowing and feeling its the only way we can offer one another I will close with my sinseerest wish of your bright future and loyalship in one respect as my husband.

May god forgive us both as ever

REINA.

And about five months after Reina's departure from Los Angeles, the following note arrived from Sven to Rhoda. The letter was posted from Calgary, Canada, but contained no address.

DEAR RHODA :

You'll think it's funny to hear from me but I owe you one thousand and here it is. Please don't tell Reina. I know you won't anyhow but I couldn't stand it with her. I couldn't make a go of it. After the automobile accident I got discouraged. It looked like things was against me and so I quit. But I have been doing fine lately. That's why I'm sending this. But before I had it pretty hard for a year there. I wish I could see your pretty little place again and talk with you. I could make you see how I feel. Don't think too hard of me. Reina didn't care for me any more and when I found that out I couldn't see any use in sticking. But I wish you all the luck in the world and I hope Reina gets along too. She will though. And I hope I do too.

SVEN.

**OLIVE BRAND**



## OLIVE BRAND

**W**HEN I think of her I visualize the Wasatch Range that overlooks Salt Lake City, the great Mormon Temple, the Great Salt Lake. And somehow I think of the University of Utah, high upon a slope of that same range and overlooking the city, wherein her father occupied the chair of mathematics. In his spare hours he was by way of being a banker, as well as an elder or vestryman in one of the principal Baptist churches of the city. Also, I think of the home of Brigham Young, that, as rumour goes, was built for his favourite among his twenty-two wives. Also, I think of the long, quiet residence streets in one of which the home of her parents stood—very solemn and middle-western—and of the social prestige which early she gathered belonged to them as being connected with a university and a bank. Also, of the long, grave, bearded face of her father, whom once she declared she in no way understood, so solemn and profound was he, always. Also, of her mother, whom she described as vibrating nervously with thoughts of what was proper, what was socially best or correct, what people would say, and what she was to do in regard to this, that, and the other thing.

She told me that first she attended a nearby ward school, and later went to the university in which her father taught. Also, that at the same time she was attending the services and Sunday school of the church of which he was a conspicuous ornament. But the various thoughts she was thinking during this time somehow never quite paralleled the outward professions and protestations of her parents. By then she had already taken up with various boys and girls of differing denominations, or none, and of more or less erratic or rebellious notions, with whom she was exchanging observations anent all that she saw and a part of what she thought, although constantly being warned by her mother, if not her father, as to the dangers of such companionships and observations. At fourteen, due to

an enthusiastic revival held in her church and the shouted exhortations of an amazingly good-looking evangelist, she experienced a psychic conviction of sin or spiritual unworthiness. Due to the soothing hands of the said evangelist upon her head and shoulders, she was converted and "saved," and actually for some time afterwards—and to the joy of her parents—read the Bible with enthusiasm, made public declaration of her conversion, in church and elsewhere, and made a nuisance of herself generally by seeking to awaken reasonably well-meaning friends and neighbours to the enormity of their spiritual degradation and their desperate need of the somewhat erratic salvation which had come to her. (This will become incongruous enough when contrasted with portions of the remainder of her life.)

But the religious fever was soon replaced by an emotional, if not an intellectual, curiosity as to life which was little short of feverish. She wanted to know. She wanted to go with people who weren't at all like her parents or those of whom they approved so heartily; also to think and talk of things of which they earnestly disapproved. And to read books of which, as she knew, they could not approve—some questionable novels about sex and fly-by-night lives of Brigham Young and the prophet, Joseph Smith. (The two latter tomes her mother eventually found, and with certain severe comments and suggestions as to punitive measures returned to the parents of the girl from whom they came.) Indeed, there was scarcely an hour from her birth to her eighteenth year, and later, that her mother did not feel it necessary to know, or at least to seek to know, where she was and what she was doing. But in no obviously nagging spirit. She was too truly fond of her. But Olive, being resourceful as well as sly, found methods to defeat her mother's surveillance most of the time.

But I am getting ahead of my story. The way in which I came to meet Olive was through a bookish lawyer—a lean and disagreeable Cassius of the old Greenwich Village world, by the way—who was giving a dinner to Olive and some friends of hers at "The Black Cat," in the days when that institution was still in full bloom. She was then the wife of a western lumberman of great wealth, who had permitted her to come east for a visit. At the time she was the guest of a feather-

brained editor and his wife, friends of the lawyer, all of whom prided themselves on being in touch with all that was uppermost Villagely, intellectually and otherwise. Olive, as I discovered at this dinner, was considered a find. She was rich, she was intellectual, but better still, youthful, vivacious, and beautiful, with heavy and glossy black hair, parted Spanish-fashion over a low, ivory-tinted forehead, and warm, direct, and glowing almond-shaped eyes. Her ivory-tinted neck and arms were beautifully rounded, and in a Spanish-appearing dress, shawl, ear-rings, a high comb, I recall thinking, amusedly, that really, for a lady from Spokane this was exceptionally Castilian.

There was a poet present whose name was rather widely flung at the time—tall and curly-haired—and him, as I noted, she devoured with her eyes. And flattered, he repaid her with toasts and compliments of the broadest and most saccharine nature. Also, there was an anarchist editor and writer of that day, who, taken by the beauty of the new-comer, bellowed against wealth and privilege while smothering her with drunken compliments. I saw him afterwards at a dozen of her parties and he could not say enough in praise of her. Then there were . . . but wait . . . Suffice it to say here that the table was tightly surrounded by at least a score of middle-aged as well as young men and women of various walks and professions, all of whom seemed to find in Olive a type as well as a central character. And she, as I could see, was the most interesting as well as the most attractive woman present. The “red ink” of those spacious, pre-war days! The cocktails and Scotch for the ordering! And Cassius, as I noticed, was not an illiberal host. Toward midnight all were called up to his rooms in the old Grosvenor, where were more liquor, cigarettes, music, conversation. The air fairly sizzled with badinage as to the why and the whenceness of this, that, and the other.

But the thing that really arrested my attention and caused me to think of this young matron with even more curiosity than would ordinarily have been the case, was the positively feverish and self-demeaning jealousy of the woman with whom I had chosen to attend the party. This jealousy, let me say in passing, in no way concerned me. She was interested in another who was out of the city at the time and who claimed her undivided favours. But the tirade to which I listened on



the way home ! The illuminating comments on the lady's life ! Who was she, anyhow ? A gauche, western nobody, that's who she was ! The wife of a far-western lumberman, who had money, of course, but who was as ignorant as a pig ! Worse, why was she living here in New York without him and he out in the west toiling ? Well, she could tell why ! Because Olive Brand was a hard, adventuring grafter, living, if she must say it, on the money of a man she despised and of whom she was ashamed ! She was a social loafer and wastrel, really, a literary and artistic pretender, and nothing more and nothing less ! Pretending to be interested in and to know art ! God ! Posing as having refinement ! She would tell the world ! Money, money, money ! A big apartment on Riverside Drive ! A car ! All the clothes and furs and jewels she could hang on herself, and with lovers galore, and yet daring to come to Greenwich Village and discuss the rights of the poor and the theories of Marx and Kropotkin ; aye, even pretending to an interest in socialism and radicalism ! Tchiff ! Let all self-respecting radicals beware of such fakirs and whited sepulchres ! (Am I getting my metaphors and similes slightly mixed ? Well, so did she.)

This is certainly interesting, I thought. There must be a little something, anyhow, to a woman who can stir up such a row, such a mood, in the breast of another woman as able as this one. And besides, she *is* very good-looking. I wonder where she lives. She had paid no particular attention to me.

Time went on and I heard nothing more regarding this reputed adventuress. Then a very different sort of person, an editor and writer of genuine ability who liked to drift around New York nosing into all sorts of things, called her to mind. He had met her somewhere. She had a most interesting place on the Drive. She did a good deal of entertaining, and it was an interesting crowd that went there. There were, to be sure, some radicals of the I.W.W. brand—a big western labour man and mine-worker among others—who seemed to like her pretty well. But what of that ? She was liberal in her interests. Besides there were a lot of fellows and women from around town who were not radical in any sense. She drew all sorts—editors, artists, adventurers, loafers. I would enjoy some of her evenings and dinners. Why not come up

sometime? I took the suggestion a little indifferently, for I was very pressed then for time. Just the same, these contrasting descriptions of her interested me and served to keep her in mind. She must be fascinating. A dub, or a nobody, could not draw and hold all sorts. Among other things, he had said that she was remarkably well informed, tolerant, and with a collection of books which he thought exceptional. I began to think that I would go.

Then one day my telephone bell rang, and a cooing female voice greeted me. Had she interrupted me? Would I forgive her, please? This was Olive Brand speaking. Did I remember? (I did.) She had had it in mind to invite me to come and see her but circumstances had not permitted. But she had asked others since to bring me, but they had failed. Hence this intrusion. Would I come this evening to dinner with her? No? Why would I make myself so very difficult? However, she understood. But to-morrow there was a small and really interesting group going with her to a Bohemian Hall on the East Side. A remarkable folk play was being given there in Bohemian and by Bohemian actors. Would I see that with her? She described enough of it to interest me. I agreed to go. But there was something more. It was the way she described the play and the actors. They were not just actors in the ordinary sense. Several whom she knew were involved in the ordinary life of the Bohemian colony. The play itself was tragic. It concerned love, poverty, oppression. As I could feel in listening to her, this was not mere gabble. What she said had a humane as well as a critical ring.

At the appointed hour there she was at my door, in a car, and befurred and bejewelled as before—exotic materialism, I thought, for one so interested in Bohemian peasants and tragedy. And yet, as we talked, quickly seeking to evaluate each other mentally, I gathered that I was dealing with a vivid, sensitive, broad-minded and widely-read person, who, none the less, had not seen enough, or certainly not too much, of life to be blasé. New York was so interesting to her. Oh, if I only knew! After Spokane! After Salt Lake City! After the dearth of mental and emotional impulses in the great lock-step of the middle and far west! Why, the very streets here, the crowds, the strange neighbourhoods, the strange

peoples gathered by thousands to themselves and speaking an alien tongue, following their native ways, perhaps, in an alien land ! Oh ! In spite of my affection for the great city, she succeeded in a few moments in transferring her own enthusiasm to me—so much so that her strong physical charm, ever operating in my case as in that of most others who met her, was subdued by her genuine mental responses.

And then we were at the entrance of the large, commonplace, labour-like hall on the upper East Side. And labour-like-looking foreigners pouring through the doors. I felt ourselves, and especially her, in her smart furs, to contrast sharply, perhaps, with this workaday world. And yet, she seemed not to be particularly affected by this thought. Beauty, as I gathered later, and even finery when properly employed, could not, in her opinion, be *de trop* or deeply objectionable anywhere. Anyone—in America, at least, as she insisted—could aspire to it. Why not present oneself at one's best everywhere so long as one indulged in no private and invidious self-laudations because of one's possessions ? She could lay aside finery when necessary—and, betimes, had—but the world was drab enough, and she preferred, without malice toward any, to make herself as presentable as possible, always. (This seemed a fair reply to the lady who wished to strip her of her ornature and galloonerics and consign her to sackcloth and ashes !)

To the one side of the main entrance was a public restaurant and drinking-hall, which appeared to be identified with this institution—a combination pool-room, reading-room, coffee-house, beer-hall, and I know not what else. Below was even a bowling-alley (These foreigners, you know !), from which emanated the sound of crashing ten-pins. She took me by the hand and opened the curtained door.

“Before we go upstairs, let's have a cup of coffee and some Bohemian cakes. They serve them in here. I saw this place one day and just walked in. They're very civil.”

She led the way to a row of small, green, marble-topped tables that snuggled against a blue or green wall. It was foreign, well enough. Individuals who looked like working-men, or small clerks, or shopkeepers, sat about reading. As we ate she cooed and purred concerning the colour of New York.

I could not help thinking of the life she must have led in the west. Then we went to the theatre upstairs. As she had predicted, the play was interesting—decidedly—and suggested, in texture, at least, “The Power of Darkness,” by Tolstoi. I gathered then what I had really not known before, that she was genuinely impressed and troubled by what I, for one, deemed the incurable ills of life, but which she, for another, did not look upon as so hopelessly irremediable. Life was going a little forward—or should—however slowly. Her reading of history, as she explained, seemed to convey as much to her. At the same time, while not for too drastic, or, perhaps, I would better say, nihilistic action herself, still, in connection with the grave battles then being waged between capital and labour in America, she was all for the betterment of the condition of labour. The wretched sweat-shop workers on the East Side! The hat and silk workers in Danbury and Paterson! How wretched was their state! Already, as I now learned, she had been to both cities in connection with labour battles of one kind and another. There were Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman, Ben Reitman, Moyer, Pettibone—the great and embattled leaders in a dozen labour contests—all of whom, since she had been here or before coming here, she had met.

What did I think of the fierce struggle between capital and labour, anyhow? My books showed that I sympathized with the poor and oppressed. Certainly, I replied, the poor and oppressed anywhere and everywhere. But not to the extent of imagining, for instance, that because an individual was poor and oppressed, it followed that there was no least reason on his part for being so. There were, of course, not only unjust and oppressive laws but unjust and oppressive people and systems to which or whom something should be done. But as for making all men competent or equal—well, nature was not like that. The trouble with Haywood and Emma Goldman and some others who were engaged in fighting the battles of labour, as I now announced, was that they assumed that because an individual was poor and oppressed it followed *instantly* that, by some magic of social chemistry which I have never been able to decipher, he was to be changed—and overnight, even—into a thinking and self-regulating social factor,

into whose hands—and with the hands and feet of every creative genius of every other walk of life tightly tied—was to be given the power and duty of arranging and regulating the social duties and opportunities of life. For my part, I could not see it. Oppression stopped? Certainly—if it could be—and poverty as thoroughly eliminated as the will and the ability of the individual anywhere would permit. But to say that all men, by any social arrangement yet devised, could be safeguarded against their own lacks or asininities—or that the working-man—the fellow who works with his hands alone—was, because of his numerical superiority alone, the chief consideration of life or government, never in a million years! I did not see it. I did not wish him oppressed. But neither did I wish to see him overpaid, or because he could organize and vote, be allowed to tell every other worker, or thinker, or creative genius the world over, how and in what measure he was to be rewarded for his labours. For, mentally, the man who, by reason of mental lacks, was compelled to work with his hands, was in no position to say to the creative thinker how or within what social or other limits he was to think, or how and in what fashion his creative thinking was to be rewarded. Life was not made for one class alone—labourer, artisan, artist, merchant, financier, or what you will—but for all. And by no means should classes be set side by side, in exact equality. They could not or did not think the same thoughts or require the same rewards, and never would. Life was not made for sameness, but for variety. Inherently, chemically, it was an unstable equation. And as represented by men, so was society. Hence . . . I grew quite dogmatic if not wholly clear and therefore . . .

Followed one of those long, and maybe futile, arguments which carried us to her apartment, through a midnight supper, and finally got me to my own rooms at 3 a.m. By now I was convinced that I had come upon a genuine personality in the shape of a woman, physically intriguing and mentally stimulating. More, I judged her to possess a warm and comforting humanity which would not let her rest entirely at ease in the face of human misery anywhere. She was compelled largely by her sympathies, I judged, to read, ponder, talk, investigate—go here, there, anywhere, in order to see, hear,

and so learn at first-hand for herself. I began to think that in spite of all I had heard thus far as to her emotional and varietistic tendencies—or because of these, maybe—we should hear more of her intellectually, later on.

By now, being interested, I accepted an invitation to dinner soon afterward, and on this occasion found her surrounded by a varied and interesting group. For along with, for instance, Moyer—he of the Haywood-Moyer-Pettibone trial for the murder of one Steunenbergh, sometime lieutenant-governor of Colorado, in the great Colorado mine-workers' strike of some years before—there were two painters and a musician, all well known to me; the editor of a liberal political weekly; the editor of a socialistic weekly of the *Daily Worker* variety; the poet who had blown compliments at her at the "Black Cat" dinner; the ever-amazing Ben Reitman, quondam "side kick" of Emma Goldman; a journalist (and remember him, please, if you will), who, possessed of means and some leisure, was doing New York—a column—for one of the leading Sunday supplements; and for colour and ornament some half-dozen youthful married and single females, all reasonably attractive and all of that hoyden and yet vigorous intellectuality which somehow leads to a *flair* for any intellectual, or artistic, or social issue worthy of the name. We were, however, gathered merely to eat, drink and be merry.

A thing that interested me at this time as much as anything else in connection with Olive Brand was the *tempo*, or mood, in which her apartment was furnished. "Sumptuous" is a fairly accurate word to use here. Apparently the lumberman had opened his purse and told her to select as she wished. Period furniture reigned, all underlaid with handsome rugs. There were tapestries, some ultra-modern statuary, and a few interesting, if almost too vivid, Neo-Impressionist paintings gathered from I scarcely know where. Rugs, hangings, lamps, pictures, books, all suggested that studied carelessness that so often characterizes those who are eager to impress one with the refinement of their surroundings. The books—any number—ranged over a wide variety of subjects. This woman was obviously a rapid, avid and serious reader. For a little while I was in doubt as to whether all this represented her own taste and interests or whether those of another were

involved. In the course of a year I was willing to credit all to her.

To all she was friendly and attentive, painstakingly so, and from the broad and rather savage comments of her guests at times I could gather that, intellectually, she was the soul of tolerance. Almost, as I felt at the time, too much so. Her interests, if anything, were too general and too liberal. But plainly, as opposed to wild social panaceas with their accompanying revolutionary disorders, she was for development in every direction. The people should be taught, taught, taught ! (If only they could be !) As I said to her afterwards, she should have chosen the rising sun as her symbol and sign manual. But also she was too interested in individuals as captains in every field to permit her to take sides, and yet as keen in some instances—that is, regarding some current labour issues, as any radical.

From the feminine or sex point of view, as I gathered on this occasion, she was very much sought after and decidedly varietistic, and this in the face of the liberal husband in the west. And for that reason, I was inclined at times, more especially at first, to think meanly of her. (To know all is to forgive all.) There was the publicist who had told me about her parties. He was a rugged, dynamic, and attractive fellow, whom I suspected of a personal interest here. And I was right. Next, there was the poet who had sung her praises at "The Black Cat." From his drunken gaiety on this and other occasions, as well as his private confession later, he had already been admitted to her favours. And the labour giant. Yes, he also. Was the woman insatiable ? I pondered.

Just the same, I liked her very much. There was something positively inspirational about her attitude toward life, her enthusiasm for it, her sense of beauty, poetry, romance, her intense interest in those who could do anything mentally—especially where the same was informed by a feeling for beauty—as well as her real pity for those who could not. I judged her to be a woman of the new, or old, freedom—I don't know which to call it—the present feminine reply to the age-old varietism of men. At this time, at least, she did not seem to care whether or not many or any held chastity in esteem. She was for life, and effort, and romance in any

form. And to her, apparently, virtue—or the monogamic code of morality—was a figment of the mind, useful to some, to others not. For herself, apparently, she had decided that she was entitled to that Dionysiac freedom which the Greeks granted to the Hetæraë. She seemed to think that women should enjoy the same sex privileges as men, but she did not argue it, and plainly she was not for limiting those for men. In so far as I could gather from actions, as well as thoughts expressed, she seemed to feel that out of freedom of contact between men and women of ability must spring not only joyous inspiration and an intellectual rebirth but social happiness, no less, more and better ideas and greater courage for the social development of man. I have often laughed listening to her and the Gargantuan Ben Reitman agreeing on what was best for the world. (Oh, Rabelais, where were you at the time?) Not only that, but she did not seem to look upon sensuality as selfish indulgence. On the other hand, it was all identified with romantic play and happiness and thought. Anything, as she once said to me, to bring about greater freedom for the mind—a social whirl in which men and women would be happy and in which, at the same time, they would think and reach worth-while conclusions.

As to the propriety or worthwhileness of this method, I have this to say. If men and women can enjoy themselves for long in such a whirl, I gather that there must be some natural justification for it. Obviously, Puritanism tends toward the humdrum and the commonplace—the mere breeding of families. And for what? On the other hand, not all men can endure the varietistic woman, any more than all women can endure the varietistic man. And not all can endure humdrum, not even the orderly. Where some are so plainly urged by their own chemisms to spin madly, why not?

Think what one will, however, Olive Brand was a personage. She introduced me, and no doubt others, to interesting people and thoughts, events and books. On one occasion, as I recall now, she took me to a secret reception to one of the then fighting labour leaders in the great Lawrence strike. It was in a shabby hall on the East Side, most carefully veiled from the police, for there was a warrant out for his arrest. This throng crowding into that stuffy, smelly hall was a revelation



to me of the passionate way in which the life-hungry and the disenfranchised cling, at times, to those who offer them a gleam of hope. To be sure, this man was no real saviour. He has since been defeated, exiled along with others and not so long ago died abroad. He was only a passionate, perhaps mentally disorganized, brooder upon the ills of life, who without a trace of profit to himself chose to fight and go down in the fierce struggle of labour for what it considers its due. But that room ! And those white, washed-out, seeking, eager faces ! And the little working Carmens and slaveys who gazed upon him with adoring eyes ! It was like looking through a window upon a world you had never really seen before. It was like seeing Christ walking thoughtfully among the forlorn of Hades.

But that was but one thing. She it was who took me to see the New York mosque of the Mohammedans ; to the only New York meeting-place of the Mazdanians ; to a prohibited prize-fight. And among other things, in the heat of a trying and, for me, rather poverty-stricken summer, she it was who eventually found an old, mud-foundered scow on the North River, near 96th Street, where long before, by some almost impractical waterman, had been established a most commonplace steak and chop restaurant, but where one could sit of a spring or summer evening and for the princely sum of seventy-five cents eat while viewing sunsets and sparkling stars. The passing of the boats ! The lap of the water below our modest table ! The gay, silly talk of a dozen people persuaded by her to come from all sorts of places ! I can see them now, hurrying dockward about seven o'clock, their minds intent upon the pleasure of enjoying a steak with potatoes upon a water-logged scow. The fol-de-rol deliciousness of it all ; the vagrom sense of adventure which had prompted her and now drew us to share her discovery with her !

But to return. Throughout these contacts I had sought to make it clear that mine was purely a mental interest. Nevertheless, and in spite of this reserve, I eventually found that I, like so many others, was being set apart for an adventure. No one thing at first carried any such import, of course. She was always "hail fellow" to all. But she had the most

ingratiating of smiles and a way of throwing up her arms when she saw one coming that said more plainly than words, "Welcome!" And she had, always, some little special news to trade with one. After a time, as I noticed, and just the same, she began inviting me alone. Now it was to listen to some music, which she could interpret either vocally or instrumentally very well indeed. Or, she had a new and rare book with which I was by no means familiar. It was so that I came to know of Frazer and "The Golden Bough." Also, the "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex," by Freud. (At her place later I met the American emissary of that great Austrian interpreter of the prime moving impulse of life.)

One day at luncheon in her apartment, the implication became almost too obvious. There was wine and the smoke of incense. She had a playful way of arranging a chair for you, then throwing down a pillow for herself at your feet and bringing a low table from which could be served coffee, or candy, or fruit, or upon which a book might be placed, or some pictures displayed. And she knew exactly into what graceful poses to sink. But before all this we had been in the kitchen together concocting some of the wonders of the feast, myself as cook's helper and scullion. And it was during this time, and to aid in the matter of progress, I make no doubt, that she began telling me the story of her life. I have told part of it. I have described the bearded whiskerando who was her father. She claimed she never understood him in any way, and that at eighteen she was positively tormented by a desire to go against all the commonplaces and solemnities that he represented. One day then, browsing among the bookshelves of the Salt Lake City library, as she here and now told me, she encountered a young lawyer of whom she knew nothing, a career-seeker from somewhere else. He was engaging and good-looking. He helped her with her search and made some suggestions as to books with which he was acquainted. He told her where his office was and contrived a re-encounter in this place, a most convenient realm. Later, he invited her to his place.

And so this affair absorbed her for over a year. As she told me now, she liked him only fairly well. But the laughing excuse she gave for being interested so long was that it was

so difficult for her to see him at all that the very difficulties fired her interest. And so the thing took on the tang of a real adventure. You may depend upon it that he was already married. But the thing that brought this incident to a close was neither danger nor disaster, but weariness—the feeling that in spite of this, her life was circumscribed and that the adventure was not very significant. After a few months, she said, she began to guess that her lover was not so remarkable after all, and that she had rather disadvantaged herself. He was still satisfied with his wife, who had means, and when the time came relinquished Olive philosophically enough.

Next, about this time there appeared on the scene the husband-to-be, the Spokane and Alaska lumberman, who had been previously described to me (but never by her) as a gross materialist and bounder. According to her, although good-looking and wealthy, his was the type of mind that is limited absolutely by what may be seen by the eye, felt by the hands, counted by numbers, or measured with a yardstick. For him there was no hinterland, unless it should prove one of insane, religious, or political illusion. But most of all, he worshipped money and all that it stood for—ample lands, large houses, expensive furnishings, bank accounts, directorships, the companionship or social acknowledgment, at least, of his position and security by others, who, like himself, had achieved money.

In this connection she had something to say concerning her father. As you will recall, she early stated that she had never understood him. Well, now, in this business of settling her in marriage she understood him even less. As she had always gathered from his conversation—or so she said—there was one thing that was important in life, and that was one's religion, and by religion in his case, be it understood, he meant not Christianity at large but the Baptist sect, of which he was a participating unit. The sect it was that was important—his church, its membership, the social and commercial favours which brisk and attentive union with it here assured him. None the less, prospective husband appearing on the scene, and having no valiant faith—but rather a thin and tentative connection with the Methodists—he was immediately escorted to the family home to meet daughter, because, as father and mother well understood and as much as said, it was time that

she was getting married. And religion or no religion, here was a rich man ! He had come to Salt Lake to look into and if possible buy certain grazing lands. And father was beside himself with care as to how daughter should look, telephoning to the house beforehand that he was bringing an important young man, a prospective client of the bank, and would daughter be so kind as to show him a little attention, for her father's sake—not a word as to the Baptist faith or even the gentleman's personal record. He was rich. The bank had already established that for itself.

At any rate, upon sight, according to her, the stranger was all attention. He lingered in Salt Lake for days. More, he filled her as well as her parents' ears with sharply defined estimates of his financial worth. And once he was out of the house on any given day, her parents frequently referred to this. Worse, in so far as Olive was concerned, a girl schoolmate had not only recently married remarkably well but had proceeded to look down on her. This, taken with her parents' encomiums, inflamed her. At least she would have great wealth. Then, too, all she had been taught to believe in regard to securing for herself a comfortable marriage berth before it should be too late operated to strengthen the thought that after the lawyer it might be the better part of caution to protect herself with a marriage certificate. Accordingly, since he wrote, they corresponded. He came again. She decided, so she said, that once she was married she could do about as she chose, anyhow. So why not ? Besides, she could lord it over her girl schoolmate. And so when he came again, she agreed. Followed a real church wedding, with Olive carrying lilies. Then a visit to Hawaii, where were some commercial matters to look into, even on the honeymoon, and then to Spokane.

By to-day, no doubt, no one needs to have described to him the intellectual and spiritual aridity of the up-and-doing American city of the nineteenth-in-population, seventeenth-in-financial-and-other-resources type. Still, as Olive told it, it made interesting listening. The D.A.R. and its immense prominence ; the Tagore Reading Circle ; the New Thought Circle ; the American Federation of Women's Clubs ; at least seven societies for the prevention or amelioration of this

or that ; plus, in some of the best families, aggressive sectarian religious views. Opposite this—the intellectual life, as it were—lay the commercial and recreative interests of the best men and their wives and daughters—the stock market, the country club, the mercantile club, the Blankum-Blankums and their seventy horse-power car, and Constantia Blankum-Blankum and her superior circle of friends. The very best intellectual drawing-room tables of that day, as she said, still displayed the latest works of F. Hopkinson Smith, Marie Corelli, and Thomas Nelson Page. There were some belated *tableaux vivants*. Billy Sunday was a great social figure and invited to the best homes.

Now despite all this and the fact that at this time this young matron was little more than sly, sensual, tricky, and ambitious, there was something else in her that was destined to change her, and change her very fast. It was not, as she was now beginning to see, money alone that she wanted. Perhaps she had just reached the place where she was beginning to find herself. At any rate, the atmosphere tended to throw her back upon herself and to emphasize her interest in things which were not like this. She began, as she said, to buy and read important books—histories, novels, biographies. True, her husband had surprised her with a library, which he had taken over from someone who had been compelled to give it up ! But the books tended only to induce heart failure ! Choice sets of Scott, Dickens, Bret Harte, and E. P. Roe ! Naturally, she began to look about for some measure of active mental life among people who did not think as these people did. But as yet she held only membership cards of the Eat and Drink Country Club, the Sunny Slope Golf Club, the Pebble Beach Boat Club—and, coincidentally, husband was making it clear that he wanted his wife to become a power socially here just as he was becoming a power financially. He urged her constantly to invite and entertain as many of those who could be of any service to him as the house would hold. Her ambition did not lie that way. She shirked and dawdled over the task, she said. They began to quarrel. Worse, she made common cause with a young matron of her own years who was feeling herself to be almost as unsatisfactorily situated. She was the wife of a real-estate plunger who had some money,

and she craved a good time, but not of the conventional stripe. Rather, she tended to radical action and was intensely interested in radicals.

Some fifteen or twenty miles from the city in which Olive was now residing was a western radical resort, or camp, in which were hibernating at this time a number of writers and agitators interested in the deadly labour union wars of the west—some Swedish and Norwegian, others American or English agitators of repute. The colony had a bad name locally because it had been rumoured that some of those who lived there as man and wife were not married. As yet there was no proof, and so no public storm, but the fact that they were radicals and identified with the cause of labour was sufficient to cast suspicion on the entire company. Yet for reasons of her own, this new friend of Olive's held a kindly feeling toward this group. From a friend who was the wife of one of the leaders of this colony she had learned much that interested her of the thoughts and aims of these people. Did not Olive want to meet some of them? There were interesting mental as well as social contacts to be found there. Did not Olive want to go? And so it was that at last these two ventured among them.

And as she now explained, the atmosphere of the place—was fascinating. There was little money, but much speculation and personal intellectual intensity. Also among them dwelt a young poet and radical with whom Olive proceeded to carry on a desperate flirtation. His name was Githeroe, later killed in a labour fight, as she told me, and he it was who introduced her to the literature and leaders of the radical world—to Strindberg, Ibsen, Gorky, Kropotkin, Henry George, and Marx. Further, because of love, he visited her at her home, and it was not long before hints were being given to H. B. Brand, her husband, that all was not well in his domestic world. His wife and Mrs. Realtor had been seen in the camp in question. A particular radical from the camp was visiting his own home from time to time when he was not there.

Followed a great conjugal storm. Brand wanted to know, and was supplied with half-truths. She had been unsophisticatedly inquiring, that was all. These radicals were not a

bad sort—very intelligent. What was wrong with them? Being a prominent and successful figure in the nineteenth-city-in-population, and a member of the chamber of commerce, he had a very great deal to say as to what was wrong with them. They were a lot of damned firebrands, anarchists, socialists! They ought to be arrested and locked up, drummed out of the country! He wouldn't have such cattle coming to his home, and she must not be seen any more within miles of the camp. If she couldn't, or wouldn't associate with the best people of her world, at least she shouldn't and couldn't associate with these others either. She would ruin herself and him—which was, no doubt, true.

Unfortunately, Olive had been broadened mentally by these contacts. She no longer cared for her husband and his friends, and she did like these people—at least she liked what they stood for—and she was beginning to look upon her husband as narrow, greedy, self-opinionated and ignorant. He had money, but apparently, in some instances at least and as she saw it, it took greed and a certain amount of dullness or insulation against intellect and romance, to say nothing of radical thought, to make money. She began to wonder how to extricate herself from the peculiar situation in which she now found herself. But the memory of those conservative convictions which from infancy on had tended to overawe her were influencing and overawing her now.

Just the same, she could not, or would not, bring herself to subscribe. She would not give up Mrs. Realtor, nor the radicals either. Clandestine meetings began. A note was intercepted. She was ordered out of the house, and then, as she was preparing to go, ordered to remain—a confession of weakness of which, as she admitted, she was quick to make use. Only she began a tentative defence of radicalism which infuriated her husband even more than the intercepted note, because, as he now feared, she was infected with that virus. But knowing now that he cared too much for her to let her go, at least easily, she stood her ground, and once more attempted to leave. Whereupon, in a rage, he tore her clothes off her and locked her in a room. Then he wept, begged forgiveness, and bought her many more things than he had destroyed.

But this was a mere beginning. He dogged her with questions

as to her conduct, views, obligations to him, "society," her position. He threatened to kill her. Once he beat her and when she tried to escape assured her that if she went he would follow her and beat her again or kill her. More, he declared he would write her parents, or visit them, and expose all. That and that only, as she said, gave her pause, for as restless as she was she still hesitated to infringe upon the local standing and spiritual and social peace of her parents, who knew nothing of her changed views and were so commonplace in theirs. It would hurt them so, particularly her father, whom she dreaded to disturb. In the meantime, her husband, taking advantage of this pause, made such a violent, if indirect, attack on the radical community through the newspapers that it became impossible for that colony to exist longer. Its members were scattered. However (which same he did not appear to grasp), he was dealing with a growing and changing organism, and one morning this organism announced at breakfast that it was through. It did not like Spokane. It did not like him. It did not intend to live with him any longer, beatings or no beatings. House, car, money, position—all were in the discard. It was going out in the world to do for itself. It was going to New York, to Columbia University among other things, to see if it could not fit itself to write short stories and plays. It just couldn't loaf and socialize. Let him find some it who could! It was through!

At first enraged, Brand was later dismayed, and even terrified. He stayed home to argue with her. She would not change. He followed her into her bedroom, and standing behind her in silence, finally exclaimed: "What's the matter with me, Olive, anyhow? Ain't I good enough? Is that it?" There was something in his tone, according to her, that was both defeated and sad. For the first time in all their period of contact, as she now said, that self-sufficiency and bravado with which he overawed others, and her even, appeared to have oozed out of him. She wanted to sympathize and to explain, but she realized it was hopeless. He could not understand her or himself. At bottom she could scarcely understand him. And only away from him, as she said she knew at the time, would she be able to prevent herself from



hating him. All that she could say was that it was impossible for her to stay.

Then he made suggestions. Why leave for good? If she wanted to go to New York, all right, he would let her—pay her expenses and tuition at Columbia—provided that when the time was up (two years, she had said)—she would agree to return and try him and this world once more. Maybe they could get along after all. He himself might change. And just once in a while, would she let him look her up in New York, just to say hello? He would swear to make just a friendly call, not a thing more. Oh, yes, and one condition more—so long as he was paying the expenses, wouldn't she agree not to have anything to do with any of these radicals, especially the poet, and refrain from being unfaithful until she decided to quit for good? (I am injecting here certain data which came out afterwards through her and certain individuals whose testimony against his wife he was endeavouring to secure. At first she told a somewhat different tale. He had not exacted all of these things, by any means.)

Thus, as I now gathered, it was something like this that was behind the New York apartment, the car, the furniture and objects of art. Naturally, he wished her to live as became the wife of one H. B. Brand. Among other things, as I gathered later, he handed her a paid-up lease for three years. But despite the fact that I did not get the exact nature of their compact at first, I was not sufficiently interested to be moved by it. I was not in love with Olive Brand, and the insoluble ills that spring from conflicting temperaments left me cold. I could see value only in separation at almost any cost. The one thing I could not relish was the thought of her using his means to disport herself in varietism and romance. Yet, who was I to write the exact law of social relationship? She interested me as a temperament, and does to this day, ten years after she is dead. I had the feeling at the time, and still have, that maybe she did not quite know herself, or that, at most, certain chemic fires burned so high that they obscured all sharp demarcation of mine and thine. They have a way of doing that. Besides, as I guessed, the amount he was allowing her could not seem so much to either herself or him. Was he not truly rich? I do recall asking her whether,

once the three years were up, she would go back to him, and her saying that she wouldn't, and adding that by that time, though, he might not want her so much any more, either—a thought that struck me as both keen and cool. Even so, I liked her. There was so much that was playful, graceful, and, above all, incalculable, in all that she did and said.

But just the same, the luncheon, with its romantic overtures, came to nothing, and at about five in the afternoon I departed, not to see her again for months. Then, on a winter afternoon, my telephone bell rang, and there she was. It was a long time since we had seen each other, wasn't it? Well, she hadn't forgotten if I had, and wouldn't I come to meet two very interesting women who were coming to her place to tea? I doubted the wisdom of it at the time, and excused myself. But another day over the telephone she suggested that I join a group that was going somewhere. I did not, for some reason, possibly another engagement. It was not long after this that she came to see me. She was very simply garbed on this occasion, as I noted, and in a curious frame of mind. Why did I avoid her? There was gossip going on about her, she knew. Was that the reason? Not at all, I assured her. I had not even heard the gossip, and was not interested, but in her I was interested always. I was very glad she had come; it was good to see her again.

She launched at once into a study of herself, just as though I were a father confessor. Her life, as she now said, had been a series of blunders, but with a right intent. Believe it or not, as I chose, blindly she had been seeking to grow. She had been restrained and the urge upward had been too much for her better judgment. It was true. Yes, it was. But out of it all so far she had realized two worth-while things—contacts with doers and thinkers and this period in New York. The experiment of studying at Columbia, followed seriously at first, had been a mistake. One could not learn to write plays or short stories so. One had to live and understand life. She knew that now. Also, that style was a gift, the result of a temperament.

But this was not all. Perhaps her seemingly unfair attitude toward her husband had alienated me. But I must not be too hard on her. She had not stated the case as clearly as

she might have. She was not poor when she married him and had really condescended more to please her parents than herself. Besides, her mind was immature at that time. And had he not had two years of her life which he valued very much? But for that he had really only given her things for which she did not care. Besides, he was very rich. Why shouldn't he give her a little since very soon now she would not be taking anything from him any more? She had a plan. She was going to do something for herself. It would be hard, since when she left her husband she would not be able to look to her parents for any aid. They would certainly sympathize with him. But just the same she intended to try to make her own way, by working. Wasn't that all right? Why couldn't we be friends once more on that score?

I did not attempt to explain my real thoughts in regard to her, although they were very flattering. I merely said I believed she had elected the right course and knew she would succeed. Also that we had never been anything but friends.

A week or two later she telephoned that she was trying to sublet her apartment for the remainder of her lease, which had something over a year to run. Also to sell her furniture and her car. With the proceeds she proposed to take a smaller place, a much smaller place. Now she wanted to be alone, she said, in order to test whether she could write. Meanwhile, and if possible, she prepared to get a divorce, or let her husband get one. It was not long before she found a place, and moved, and then I was invited to come and see her. It was far north, near One Hundred and Ninetieth Street, in a newer and less attractive section, much poorer. The building was a five-story affair, with a very small elevator which ran only when you could get the negro who was the man-of-all-work to come and operate it. The cost, I guessed, could not be more than thirty-five or forty dollars a month. Her place was two flights up and consisted of a small living-room, bedroom, kitchenette and bath. But books crowded the walls of the living-room and bedroom. Her interesting books! Nearly all of the remaining space was taken by her piano, a victrola, and a typewriter. A snug fit. From the window of her kitchen one obtained a rather charming view of the upper city, but from nowhere else.

I cannot say that she looked or seemed any more practical or sane here than she had in the other place. Rather the dreamer and poet that she really was, slowly evolving, to be sure, but infected with the virus of the ideal which would never let her rest. She was anxious, as she now said, to say or do something that would reflect her own point of view and by that means make her own way in life. I liked her much better. By degrees I noticed also that her wardrobe grew simpler—a thought that did not sadden me, seeing that she had never needed all she had in the first instance. Next—and this was a fact that interested me and must have impressed her, too—was that although here she had none of the facilities for offering that hospitality which had characterized her on Riverside Drive, still she was followed by as interesting a group of people as ever I saw in leash to any temperament in New York—editors, writers, artists, propagandists, socialists, anarchists, conservatives, as you will. Her petty rooms were crowded at least two or three times a week with those who came this distance to find her, and without hope of either dinner or drinks.

But it was now when she was seeking to sever herself from the old life that her real troubles began. For her husband, who had come to New York not long before she moved this time, had conveyed to her the fact that all along he had been aware of the type of life she had been and, as he believed, still was, leading, and that unless she now returned to him he would furnish her with no more money and would expose her, not only to her parents in the west but to the public. He had changed his mind, he said. Her conduct in his absence and on his money had completely alienated him. She was this, she was that. Still, as anyone could see, he still cared for her in some twisted, erratic way. For, as he now stated (and I will explain my authority later), as bad as she was, and as determined as he was to punish her, still, assuming that she would return to him and “behave” herself, he would not act in the drastic fashion he threatened.

The way I came to know all this was this : One day there was a ring at my door—a ring, by the way, which had been preceded by a visit from Olive herself, in which she had explained how troublesome and determined and non-understanding

the man really was and how he was setting out to force her to do that which she could never do. But now here was the man himself—of medium height, smooth-shaven, rather soundly built, dynamic, and authoritative. My name was so-and-so, was it not? (It was.) I was a friend of Olive Brand's, was I not—one of her admirers and well-wishers? (I was all of that, I hoped.) Well, then he had something he would like to say to me. Could I spare him a few minutes? It might prove of value to Olive and himself. Being invited in, he was soon launched upon an intimate and interesting picture of their married past. Oh, what a girl was Olive before ever she had been tainted with the virus of these radicals! How excellent was her family! She had been carefully guarded, and he had thought that she would be contented with the financial and social opportunities he was able to offer her in Spokane. But, alas, these radicals! They had turned her head. She was following an insane, anarchistic course which could only lead to her destruction. Why, look at her life here in New York! And now he proceeded to set forth what plainly hired spy-men had brought to his ears. She was, or had been, in the company of this, that, and the other individual—"notorious," as he labelled them—Greenwich Village ne'er-do-wells, pseudo and disgraced artists and poets, loafers, I.W.W. social wreckers—and the like—an unholy and disgraceful crew. Even now, as he knew and could prove, she frequented the Liberal Club. She knew and associated with Emma Goldman, Ben Reitman, Bill Haywood, Thomas Moyer, and other notorious radicals and labour leaders. She had even taken part in labour strikes, helping make soup for strikers, serving in kitchen camps. And as he set forth all this, his practical and conservative mouth hardened, his jaw squared, and his eyes flashed. Actually the material convictions of the man fairly fascinated me. Those carefully cut clothes, new and highly polished shoes, the small bright bow-tie that emphasized his striped shirt and low, turned-down collar.

Lord, what a far cry from this man to this woman! I thought. And what a commentary on the fumbling, groping, unilluminated state of youth—and of maturity, for that matter, in many instances—that this girl and this man should ever have

imagined that they could live together ; that he should now really imagine that if she would return he could live with her ! And what a hell, assuming that this could be forced on her, it would prove for her and him ! I studied him curiously, for I saw that he believed for some reason that I was likely to have some influence on her. And in his favour. I proceeded to explain that I feared there was a deep-seated temperamental as well as mental difference here which could not be overcome by quarrelling or force. Both were plainly looking at life from different angles. What appeared so dreadful to him did not appear dreadful to her—nor to myself, for that matter. For these several reasons, as I now blandly cooed, it would be best if he were to drop this pursuit. Cut her off from all financial aid if he chose (I understood that he had already done so), but let her go her own way, work out her own destiny.

Whereupon he suddenly whirled upon me. That was not the way he would have it at all. She was a vile woman, a vampire, a wastrel. Unless she agreed to come back and live with him at once, he would proceed to show her up. He had been having her watched all this time. He knew who her friends were and what her relations with them had been. Wait until her parents and her friends and relatives in Salt Lake heard of this ! He would hire lawyers and newspapermen. He would get articles published and blow up Greenwich Village and these radicals ! He would fix her. Whereupon I suggested that we part. It would do no good for him to harangue me. I had no real mental influence on her and if I had I would not use it to effect a reunion which I could only look upon as a mistake. He stalked slowly out of the place and that was the last I ever saw of him.

But the reunion did not come about. True, he did annoy and even frighten her, causing her, as she plainly evinced from time to time, intense mental anguish. Her mail was intercepted and opened. Her telephone wire tapped and all messages coming to her relayed to him. It was reported at the time among those who knew her that telephone messages concerning her, and to the following effect, were distributed : "Is that Mr. —— ?" "Yes." "You know Olive Brand ?" "Certainly !" "This is a friend of yours

speaking. You had better have nothing more to do with her. She is afflicted with . . ." (the standard complaint). Imagine this type of social warfare, and by one who pretended to love her and who wanted her to live with him ! Naturally, some who had known and liked her were frightened away. Others, of whom I chanced to be one, were in no wise affected. But he sought to, and to a certain extent did, make a pariah of her, even though he was still willing to take her back himself.

One of the things he did effect was this. Since he was dogging her every move, as it were, it became necessary for her to flee, and this time by night, to a very small apartment on the East Side, which had no telephone to watch, and where she lived under another name. Incidentally, she now paid a return visit to her parents in Salt Lake, in order to forestall, if possible, the damaging attacks she felt certain he was about to make. But, as she explained afterwards, nothing had been gained by that, not even the mental ease of her parents in regard to her. For, plainly, by now, they looked upon her as a failure, her husband as the epitome of law and order and all worth-while forms. Her father was hopelessly set in orthodox and conventional views and did not approve of divorce. Once married, it was best to stay married. Why should she not return to her wealthy husband ?

But that small apartment on the upper East Side ! And how she now contrasted with her old self ! I recall meeting her once in First Avenue, near 66th Street. She wore a little gingham house dress and was carrying some groceries and a magazine in a basket. Except as to fine feathers, she had not changed much, looked even more interesting to me in that swarming upper East Side than she did on the Drive. Invited to see her new place, we trudged up three flights of slate steps to a combination kitchen and dining-room, with a living-room attached. But they looked over the East River, a gracious view, and it was clean. Also, there were her books and a typewriter and a piano. She explained that her husband's actions had caused her to fear for her friends, and so it was best to hide from all. But she was writing now, or trying to—short stories, poems, essays, a play. And if anything should ever come of her efforts in a public way, well then, she would be able to live, and happily, by herself or with someone, but

mentally and spiritually free, or so she seemed to think at least.

Yet from thence on, for a time at least, her life seemed to grow darker rather than brighter. According to her, before actually filing suit, Brand returned to her parents and so filled them with tales of her present state that for the time being, at any rate, they would not even communicate with her. Next, he attached the lease and contents of her old apartment. And we all know how profitable writing—and especially intellectual writing—can be for the beginner. Worse, as I could see, she had no clear idea as yet as to what she could do or what it is that the public really cares for. During the first year of this East Side life, therefore, her piano and victrola disappeared, and she seemed to be in danger of real want. Certainly, as I saw it, she was beginning to pay a very fair price for her convictions and her ideals.

And then . . .

But before I tell the rest I should like to tell one or two charming incidents that befell her over there. One evening when I went to see her she showed me a letter that had been shoved under her door by one of those firebrand poet lovers who sometimes take the heart of a woman by storm. He was a writer—a poet of sorts—a youth of some ability who afterwards made a name for himself as a soldier in France. He knew of her troubles, of how she had hidden away. I never read a more beautiful letter. Full of genuine emotion and admiration—the kind of a letter any woman would be delighted to receive. He spoke of her white, thoughtful face, her black hair, of how he had been reminded of mother-of-pearl and jet and scarlet. Did she stand in need? He would be glad to help her. But whether she ever looked at or thought of him again, he would treasure the memory of her face, the music of her steps. And then one day, weeks later, there was an envelope containing some money lying in the same place. He thought she might be in actual want, I presume.

And again, one of those labour men whom I have mentioned—a really distinguished leader in his way—sought her out and offered aid. And asking him about her once, he said to me that among all of the women he had known whose sympathies had been enlisted by labour troubles, Olive seemed not the



most understanding, perhaps, but the most sympathetic and inspirational. "She helped at Lawrence and Paterson," he said. "There was real danger, always, and it was all ugly and hard. She felt sorry for the workers, I suppose, especially the hungry and defeated, but mostly, I think, she saw something else—adventure, dignity, beauty, in an almost hopeless contest. It was something, not to go about with her exactly, but just to see her. She had a smile, and hope, and, she conveyed something to me—inspiration, I think it was."

And then one day, through the mail, and while she was still living on the East Side, I received the following poem. It was addressed to me, carried my name at the head, and caused me to pause, to understand, to know, that this woman could most surely distinguish herself if she would—not in the petty little passing fiction field, but in some broader walk of thought and inspiration, where live, and dream, and execute, those who most truly influence the world.

I offer the poem in evidence :

Out  
 Amid endless levelness, a cheerless span,  
 I find you.  
 Apart . . .  
 Alone . . .  
 Missing  
 What is not there.

Out  
 In lightlessness  
 Where sense pales to sensuality,  
 Where both lapse to dreams,  
 Dream dies to night,  
 And night dispels to nothingness,  
 I find you.  
 Fixed.  
 Paling with the paling dream,  
 A nihilistic acolyte  
 Of night and nothingness,  
 Needing  
 What is not there.

Out  
On the breast of barrenness,  
I find you,  
Rooted.  
Not born to what is there.  
Wishing . . .  
What is not there.

Amid a parching seethingness,  
A reeking loneliness,  
I find you.  
Breaking . . .  
Athirst . . .  
Insatiate !

In the round-and-all-about  
Wherein,  
Though moving,  
All of us are fixed,  
As surely as the lily,  
Cactus,  
Or the mignonette,

And from which,  
Like them,  
We draw our seasoned sustenance  
Of body and of soul,  
I find you,  
Lifting up your head,  
Aspiring thought,  
Craving love,  
Desirous of creation's power.

In the round-and-all-about  
That conditions all of us  
Much more than what is handed down,  
More,  
Perhaps,  
Than occult urge called will within,  
I find you,  
Wooing rain,  
And sun,  
And life,  
And light,  
With every eager, needful, hopeful, wistful bit of you.

In a peopled paradoxical desert  
 I find you.  
 Wasting,  
 Drying in the heat so dry.

People . . . People . . . People . . . People !  
 Everywhere !  
 But all  
 Each one  
 A strange mirage.  
 Religions, philosophies,  
 Games for wealth and power.  
 Arts,  
 Movements,  
 Revolutions . . .  
 Everywhere !  
 But not a one more than a desert's dream  
 Of water-springs that cannot satisfy.

To this round-and-all-about  
 You are as swiftly sensitive  
 As the mignonette or lily.  
 Indeed . . .  
 You . . . in your turn . . .  
 Are but a plant.  
 . . . . .  
 A human plant.  
 Your body is the stem.  
 Your brain  
 Its destined, lovely flowering.  
 And like the lily  
 Or the mignonette,  
 You too are rooted in the round-and-all-about,  
 And  
 Again like them,  
 You too are as deeply sensitive.

I find you  
 And,  
 I pause beside you.  
 I, too, have known  
 The levelness and lightlessness  
 The loneliness and barrenness  
 The strange mirages and evasive dreams,

I look upon you  
With wonder, reverence and awe.  
I watch you  
Lifting up your head,  
Aspiring thought,  
Wooing life and light,  
Craving love,  
Desirous of Creation's power,  
And,  
I understand.

I cannot speak,  
I cannot breathe,  
I cannot move.  
I only weep a tear  
That, unseen, trickles  
Out of sight and sense.  
Then, toward you,  
Stretch out my hands.

I would put hands upon you.  
I would bring you home with me,  
And to you I would say :  
You were, in days of birth,  
Some dear dead plant's plant.  
You were,  
In fullness of your first desires,  
The wide world's plant.  
You were,  
In after days,  
The desert's plant.

. . . . .

And thus . . .  
I find you  
But now  
You are my plant.  
I put my hands upon you.  
I bring you all to me.  
I place your stem between my breasts.  
I hold you here above my heart.  
I feel your roots within my heart  
As surely as I feel  
The blood that yields me life.

And now and then,  
In some seductive mood,  
A wandering, truant thought  
Does make me wish  
I might have been the mother plant  
That mothered you  
. . . The slender pod that once  
Did hold you close and dark.  
The soil  
That moistly first  
Did cradle you,  
That nursed you on to life,  
Expression,  
Wide-eyed, cognate thought.

The gardener's hand  
That could have tended budding eagerness . . .  
Yet . . .  
Oh . . . why the wish ?  
It has not happened so.  
And yet,  
At times,  
It seems  
As if  
All this had really been  
All sweetly strangely true ;  
As if . . .  
I seem to have the memory of such things.

Yet after all  
I am not sure  
But that 'tis better  
Than to seek . . .  
And seek . . .  
And seek . . .  
To now and then discover . . .  
To lovingly transplant . . .  
In this so yearning,  
Craving,  
Life-adoptive way.

I sought  
Across the levelness and lightlessness :

I sought  
Across the loneliness and barrenness ;  
I sought  
Through passing people ;  
I sought  
Through bright mirages and evasive dreams ;  
I sought  
Quite past and through  
All things that could not satisfy ;  
But now,  
Now,  
I . . . yes . . .  
I would that I might be  
The earth  
In which to bed your roots anew ;  
The rain  
That nourishing  
Descends  
In blessed joyful weeping :  
The air,  
The wind  
To feed your blossoming,  
The bee  
That brings the diverse golden inspiration dust ;  
The stem  
On which to hang the wondrous mellow fruit of you ;  
The sky  
To hold the sun that sends inceptive rays ;  
Horizons far  
Toward which you look . . . and look  
To guess what is beyond ;  
The sun itself  
That in its burning, passionate  
To you is chief and first  
Your qualitative source of life.

And . . . oh !  
And would now that I could . . .  
That large, caressing something be . . .  
That understanding, pregnant solitude,  
The round-and-all-about, . . .  
That is not levelness or cheerlessness,  
That is not loneliness or barrenness,  
In which you move,

And joy  
And have your being . . .  
The space,  
The peace  
And light,  
In which you need to be.  
A plant indeed you are . . .  
A human plant,  
Your body is the stem,  
Your brain,  
Its destined, lovely flowering.  
And like the sweeter plants  
So swiftly sensitive  
To all that is . . .  
The round-and-all-about . . .  
Wherein, though moving,  
All are fixed,  
As surely as the lily or the mignonette.  
And from which, like them,  
We draw our seasoned sustenance  
Of body  
And of soul.  
Yet seeking that that is not . . .  
And dreaming that that may not be.

Oh, plant !  
Dear, human plant !  
Lift up your leaves !  
Take root !  
Aspire again !  
Keep heart !  
Keep faith !  
Dare look into the sun,  
Your face to his  
As now.  
Dare woo and win all life and light,  
Dare drink the rain and wind,  
Dare grow.  
Presume again the dream !  
Produce the bloom !  
Bring forth the fruit !  
Oh, plant . . .  
Oh, human plant . . .

Yet apart from telling her how much I thought of it—how truly sensitive to and understanding of life I knew it to be—it led to nothing more than that warm friendship that already existed between us. She knew that I saw her for what she was—the aspirant, the dreamer, one who looked out with wide, clear, sensitive eyes upon the mystery of life and paused to wonder at and meditate upon now this, now that, and yet to know that life is not to be understood—that for man it remains, and must remain, an insoluble secret, his one approach the door of beauty.

Somewhere farther back I asked you to remember a certain journalist—one of the group by which I found her surrounded at the first dinner in her apartment that I ever attended. An interesting fellow this—worthy, as time was to prove (to me, at least), of a separate paper. And yet it can never be written. I can only, and finally, deal with him here. But among so many whom I encountered and entertained from time to time in New York, Jethro was one who fixed himself in my mind, made a strong personal impression. And yet exactly why I sometimes asked myself. Assuredly he was not of a highly imaginative turn. Or was he? A little gross, a little material in his tastes, strong for parties, dinners, first nights, conventional doings in society and theatrical and Bohemian circles, and yet also, as anyone could tell after an hour with him, a most amazingly well-informed man, and one who went to primary sources in history, science, and the arts for the information which guided him and gave him his place as an editor and journalist. But without, as I often thought, a certain valuable delicacy or sensitivity, without which . . . well . . . And yet with something a little rueful about him, too, as though, at times, and in the face of the upstanding, two-fisted animality, argumentative and critical vigour of him, one sensed or heard something—a sorrowful little voice underground—a low, half-captured, half-evasive melody, or mood, or cry. I used to wonder.

And now, one day, some seven months after the poem and the difficulties which had driven Olive Brand to the East Side, and when, understandably enough, seeing that I had been south for the winter, I had not seen her in four months, there was a knock at my studio door, and outside it stood



Jethro. He had just learned that I was back. He had something of importance to him that he wished to communicate to me.

"You're one of Olive's best friends, I know," he began.

"I hope so," I replied.

"Well, you don't know it, but we've been seeing a great deal of each other of late . . . well . . . we're going to get married, as soon as a little business in connection with her divorce can be arranged. It's almost settled now, and we want you to stand up with us, act as best man, if you will, when the time comes. She wants you to do it," and he looked at me as much as to say: This must be a surprise to you, I know, but so it is.

"Sure! Delighted! Congratulations!" I answered.

"Say as much to Olive. But how about this, anyhow? I thought she couldn't get a divorce. What about the Honourable H. B. Brand?"

"All done and fixed," he said. "The trouble with Olive is that she's a damned bad manager. She makes herself look worse than she is. And all because she hasn't managed right. But that's neither here nor there. We're going to get married just the same. I'm straightening out her affairs for her. I've just been to see that husband of hers, but before I went I took care to get a lot of affidavits from people who know something about him as well as her, some of whom he approached with money, by the way. That wouldn't look well in those Spokane papers if it were published there," he chuckled, "and anyhow, I felt all the time that he was bluffing. I hired a couple of lawyers out there, and between us we made him see the light. I told him that I wanted to marry Olive. He finally agreed to let her get a divorce over here in Jersey, and it'll all be fixed in a little while now. That's why I came around to see you to-day."

You could have knocked me flat with a very light blow. I couldn't get it, as the saying goes. But I certainly looked upon it as a happy outcome for Olive. For Jethro was in many respects such a substantial, dependable sort of a fellow, with means and brains, and if Olive had come to love him, why not? To be sure, she was not marrying a poet, nor yet a grand dramatic figure such as her very remarkable temperament

might have entitled her to—but, after all, might there not be more to him than I had perceived? I began to meditate as to this.

. . . Meanwhile . . . they were married, and at the City Hall of all places, by the City Clerk, a friend of Jethro's and by virtue of his office legally entitled to tie the knot. I was there and signed the certificate by request. Before this, however, Jethro had taken an entire house on the upper West Side and with Olive's aid and supervision had fixed it up. Books, books, books. A large, comfortable living-room, with a fire-place; a dining-room, a library and separate work-rooms for Olive and Jethro on separate floors; several bedroom and bath suites; a new piano and victrola. And was I welcome there? They were always calling up to know when I was coming up for dinner. But the sight of either in their respective rôles of faithful husband and wife used to make me laugh. For, like Olive, Jethro had led no simple life.

Nevertheless, and from the beginning, I suspected, as well as sensed, that there was something more to this union than temperamental or emotional affinity, with all that that implies. Olive, as I knew, was not only sensitive but idealistic, and so what was it that first and last fixed her interest on Jethro? His mind? Was his mind as remarkable or as fascinating as hers? I knew it was not. His was a good, sound mind, and well-furnished intellectually. Also it was accompanied by an expansive, generous, and pagan temperament. But even so. Hers was a drifting, emotional, colourful, seeking thing that would not be likely to rest permanently anywhere. Or would it? As for his money, or his mental and physical assurance in the face of life and materiality, well, I could not really believe (especially after seeing Olive on the East Side) that he was so needful to her, if at all. And if not, then what . . . ?

Often I studied each critically, and especially when they were together in their new home. Knowing Jethro and his interest in all night doings anywhere, as well as Olive's naturally varietistic temperament, I was given to venturing thinly veiled commentaries. "How do you explain all this, Olive? I thought you of all people would find the simple

home life, this broom and duster stuff, a little . . . well . . . you know . . . say mentally insubstantial, or lacking in lustre, maybe," to which she would reply, as a rule, with her eyes only, or a quizzical, *Mona-Lisa-like* smile. And such eyes—the long, dark, Oriental, and so undecipherable, eye. But once she said: "Oh, there is more in heaven and earth than is . . . you know."

"I thought as much," I replied.

And to Jethro, seeing him cooking in the kitchen one night, a white apron around his ample waist: "This is beyond me. How the night clubs must mourn the loss of their most enthusiastic patron!"

"In the first place," he replied, "I am basting a ham. In the second, you're trying to sow seeds of discord in this poppy patch. Have a heart!"

But for all my doubts they appeared to understand each other. And presently—in the course of a year—the underlying essence became more and more apparent. I had not sensed it, but before going over to journalism completely Jethro had had bright dreams of becoming a writer. Short stories, plays, essays, as I gathered afterward from Olive, had been essayed by him, but to no effectual result. And privily, for all his outward bravado, he had grieved. And that, as I now sensed, was the thing that I had noted in him but had not understood—a mental voice of defeat. On the other hand, Olive, while dreaming after the same fashion, had actually, and although much younger, achieved more. True, she had not achieved publication as yet, but in her desk were many poems, essays, some short stories and a play even, that needed little more than reshaping to give them their ultimate value. And these things, read by Jethro, and their real import gathered, had combined with a genuine affection as well as admiration for her to bring about that devotion which had resulted in marriage. She sensed his lacks, sympathized with his aspirations, and because of her affection for him had soon offered to co-operate with him in the labour of artistic production. They were to write plays, short stories, novels even, together. Poetry and the essay forms (having singular moods and opinions which these forms would best or most individually convey) she reserved to herself. And he, interested in science, philosophy,

history, biography, and the like, preferred to reserve to himself certain constructive papers in those fields. But really, in his case, the play and the short story—more particularly the play—came first. And soon after their union they were hard at work on first one and then another, all of which had interest and force, and one of which presently, in the second year of their marriage, achieved production.

But the excitement in Jethro! And the satisfaction! And the intense adoration, mounting almost to idolatry, for his brilliant wife! Night clubs? Pooh! Village parties? Who were these silly Villagers anyhow? A lot of wastrels, profitless dreamers and adventurers! Solid work! Solid achievement! That was the thing! A delicious, contenting union such as this, with one's friends gathering around and making of the new home a delightful *salon*. One could see him actually broadening and taking on security and assurance even under her encouraging influence, and half forgetting that he had ever been a dreaming, wastrel Villager himself.

But the days clock merrily, or dolefully, along, as you will. And time and chance happen to all of us. A year, two, three of this . . . with the gayest and most contented of groups centring around this new couple. And then, one day, the feelingless hand of Fate. I called Jethro on the telephone one morning to seek certain information I desired, and in passing he announced that Olive was not feeling well . . . a little cold, he thought, but nothing serious . . . so long! But the next afternoon he called up to say that she was no better, worse even, and that he was becoming a little worried. She had developed a severe sore throat and some fever. There was a doctor coming now. Later that same evening I called, only to learn that he was then removing her to St. Luke's, and that in case I wished to go there I would find her in a certain private room, the number of which he gave me.

I hurried to the hospital to see for myself. To my emotional relief I found her resting most comfortably and, because of Jethro's concern, amusedly, in one of those very simple hospital rooms for which they charge so much. But, at that, she appeared to have a temperature, and privately Jethro informed me that the doctor feared pneumonia. I jested with him

about giving up so easily and returned to Olive, who talked only of getting up soon. In the past few weeks they had been planning a summer home on the Jersey coast. There was a certain inlet the very shore of which, to the water's edge, could be utilized for a lawn. A prospective breakfast-room and three bedrooms were to command the morning sun rising out of the sea. They were planning a small dock, a motor-boat, and all was to be reached from New York in a little over two hours. The following spring and summer, if I would, I was to visit them there.

But the next morning when I called, she was not so well—a little more fever—and that night she was babbling nonsense. A specialist had taken charge, and Jethro was depressed beyond words. He was waxy pale the while he pretended to hope. And the next day she was rational, but weaker. I called with flowers. We talked of various things, and now for the first time, since Jethro was not present, she appeared depressed. When I rallied her about her courage, she said: "Oh, it isn't of myself I'm thinking. I feel sorry for Jack. He's been so much better off with me."

Exactly, I thought, but aloud, said: "I know it, Olive."

"I knew you did. You remember that poem I sent you?"

"I love it. It is beautiful, not because of me but because of you. I have it with me always."

"I wanted you to know. But I knew afterwards that it was a sort of farewell to you. You couldn't care for me enough, could you?"

"No, Olive," I replied, "not in that way. But you know how life is. We can't love where and when we would. But if you think I haven't thought you beautiful, or your mind and life wonderful . . . that I do not think so now . . ."

She took my hands and held them. "Oh, I know, I know," she said, "so I thought it was best to do something for Jack. He needed me so."

"You have done everything for him," I said. "I have seen it."

"That is why I would like to go on," she said.

But the next day she was irrational. And the next. There were no more conversations. And at five one afternoon Jethro telephoned that she had died at four.

The usual obsequies—expansive, oppressive, dull. And after that a long trip for Jethro to Utah. Her parents had begged that her body be brought there. And to gratify them he had consented. Later, a calmer state of mind ; he pictured her parents, their real as well as their social reaction to her death and home-coming. For be it remembered that they had never been reconciled to her divorce and remarriage, nor to any of the things reported of her to them. But now that she was dead, their blood-grief was real enough—moving—heart-breaking, so Jethro said—for they were so old, and she was of their happiest past. Yet once she was buried, he—Jethro—had been subjected, so he said, to a most damnable string of introductions and social encounters. This was because of the professor's desire to make clear to everyone in his set in Salt Lake that things were not quite as bad as had been rumoured. For here was Jethro, a very presentable man, indeed. And many references to the passing of Olive, together with accounts of her artistic interests.

"I stood it for two days," he said, "then I caught an early morning train for New York. I couldn't stand another hour. But they laid her," he continued, "on a slope above the city, where she can look down and see her old skating pond, and the school, and I guess she'll be all right there."

But the effect on Jethro ! Quickly, and perhaps too thinly, I have hurried over the grim period in which he realized, all too blindly, that she was gone ; that never again anywhere in all time or space would he be permitted to repeat or enjoy the delightful relationship which had so fortified him against the dicing of Fate and the lapse of time. He had been getting along so well, so very well, with her, and she with him. Both, I think, had been truly happy—as much as two people well can be in this choppy, windy scene. But now this. And the big house with all her books, and his. Her music. Her writings. I called frequently to sit with him and cheer him up, if possible, but soon found that he could not really endure the house any longer. True, he was going to bring on his mother and sister, move to a new scene, perhaps, try and pull himself together and go on with his work. But I noted, as time passed, and although he did bring on his mother and sister, and they moved, still he could

not successfully resume where, jointly, as in the plays and short stories, they had left off. Ah, no. He tried, I will admit. For something over a year, after the blow of her death had seemingly worn off, he wrote, wrote, wrote. And he read as never before, perhaps. But nothing came of it. One could see as well as feel it. He had no one to talk to, no one to share with him the, for him, difficult labour of composition. Quite frequently I heard of him at various Bohemian parties. It was said that he was taking to drink and a somewhat loose life, but only partially was this true. The fact was that he was still trying, but with lapses. And then, due to a chance meeting with a medical investigator who lacked writing ability but who was hard upon the trail of the mystery of the human glands—endocrine and others—and their influence upon the human temperament and our social morals, he turned to labour for this man, and presently appeared not only as this medico's public sponsor but scriptic interpreter. As he once said to me, he really did not know how sound it all was and where it would get, but it was interesting and it might lead eventually to some plays and stories.

But more and more, as I noticed, he seemed to be losing interest in everything. Life obtruded itself now not only as an insoluble but at times as a wholly contemptible mystery. The brevity of everything ! The frailty and bestiality and clowning nonsensicality of *Homo sapiens* at top and at bottom—his inane ambitions, his pathetic faiths and worse hopes ! His astounding efforts to make something out of nothing ! And a little more or less of one or another gland juice would turn a Lincoln, say, into a small-town loafer and joke ! God ! What were people living for, anyway ? In spite of all their public professions, what did they really do privately when they fancied they were not seen ? The lie of human purity, decency, morality, charity, brotherhood, parenthood ! A wild, meaningless dance of lunatics in an asylum !

And with such a view, of course, drinking and partying—wheresoever and with whomsoever. His mother, a profound Christian Scientist, almost a healer, began to demonstrate "the truth" in regard to him ; his sister to wonder and worry and at times to urge him to come home more, rest more, work

more. But rather in vain, I think. He was now about as he was when Olive first encountered him, only ten years older, less restrained, less hopeful, but still only forty-two.

One day at about this time he dropped in to see me. We talked of many things—his work, his future. There was some talk, of course, of endocrine glands and their social meaning. A book concerning them was to appear one day. But meanwhile he was not as well as he should be. A bend in the œsophagus—whatever that may mean—a slight enlargement of the liver—or so the X-ray showed. Certainly he looked flabby, and announced that he had cut out drink and late hours. His doctor had ordered this. But presently he was on Life again—its meaninglessness, its brevity.

"What you really need, Jack," I said, "is to find some girl who can understand you, and work with you. You would be all right if . . ."

"Sure, if I had a girl like Olive. I know. Well, I can't find her. There never was but one, I guess."

He got up to go. The look on his face was revealing—sad and yet resigned. I was suffused with pity.

In the spring I wrote him of a five-hundred-mile walk I proposed taking. I wanted him to join me for a few days. The letter in reply was the enthusiastic and yet plaintive commentary of one who felt he should do as much, yet could not negotiate it. The spirit was willing, but . . . In the fall I invited him to the country, only to receive, after ten days, a letter from his sister. For two weeks, she said, he had been ill—for ten days unconscious. The last conscious thing he had done was to read my letter and say that he would answer it when he got up. Since then, the aberration of fever, a high pulse and a temperature of 103 to 107, never less. And babbling of Olive, Olive, the days before he was married to her, and the days afterward. At the house, when I reached it, was a mutual friend, who told me that just before Jethro's illness he had been with him at his place in the country. And unfortunately he had started drinking, although when he came he said he would drink nothing. Then a slight cold, then fever, and instantly aberration.

"A funny thing," he said, "the moment he was out of his head he began talking of that wife of his—Olive Brand, you know."



"Yes, I know," I said.

"He talked of her all the time."

"Interesting," I said.

And upstairs on a hospital bed—attendants, three doctors—there he was, babbling, babbling, babbling, as fever patients will. Now he was toasting someone—was everybody in on this—glasses up! Next he was marshalling a group into a car. Were all ready? Next, he wanted to go home. He must go home. Olive said . . . Next, it was his mother or sister, or both, for whom he was calling. I held his hand, looked, spoke. "Listen, Jack, see here! You know me. Sure, you know me." "Of course, I know you," he replied, his eyes clearing for a second. "It's . . ." and he spoke my name. It was farewell.

Fourteen more days and still alive, but "out of his senses," as the phrase runs. The same high fever, the same talk of Olive.

"A queer thing," his sister said to me. "This thing began just as Olive's did, with a slight sore throat and then this fever. On the sixth day, which was the day she died, we didn't expect him to live. His strength was nearly gone. And he talked of her all the time. I don't know what caused him to rally."

But on the twenty-ninth day of his fever, he died. On the way to his home I said to the taxi driver: "Go through the Park, across a Hundred Tenth, and up Broadway." Instead, to my surprise, he turned in at Morningside Heights and directly under the window of the hospital room in which Olive died. Only I was not aware of it until looking up, there it was. And then I said: "Olive, Olive. Can it really be that you would call him? Are you that sorry?"

ELLEN ADAMS WRYNN



## ELLEN ADAMS WRYNN

**I** FIRST came to know of her while editing one of the several magazines with which from time to time I have been connected. I had a story at once sensuous and exotic which required picturization. It concerned some form of adventure and love in Egypt, and I had been told that it would probably be illustrated most satisfactorily by her. Though not widely known, it was rumoured that she was competent, and even exceptional. She was doing general illustration in order to obtain sufficient money to pursue her more important art dreams. Not having an art director at the time, I wrote her myself and asked her to come to see me. She did. And when I explained the nature of the story, she appeared temperamentally to respond to it—said she would like to try, and agreed to illustrate it for a nominal sum.

But what interested me most at the time was her personality. She was young, attractive, vigorous, and ambitious, more blonde than brunette, but certainly not so fair as dark—a chestnut blonde. She smiled in a bubbly, cheerful way as we talked, the while in some roundabout fashion she came to tell me that she was from Philadelphia and had had all of her art training in the School of Design there. Also that in some conventional art exhibit then holding she had a picture “on the line.” If I were up that way at any time she would be glad to have me look at it. And if I would drop in at her studio at any time, she would be glad to show me some other things she had done. Before she left we had come to be quite good friends, and I decided that one day I would look in on her. I liked her, though my first impression was of just another good-looking girl interested in art and the Bohemian life of the strugglers in the art world of that day, and that probably her enthusiasm would not outlast the numerous trials and tribulations of those who essay illustration and painting in general. But I was wrong.

Then one day, chancing to attend the exhibit mentioned, I looked up her picture and found it to be a rather charmingly conceived and arranged boudoir scene, albeit in the conventional manner of the day. That is, there was nothing really new in subject or treatment. None the less, the colours and arrangement were pleasing—a rounded, sensual girl of some eighteen years of age, looking not wholly unlike herself, seated before a three-panel dressing-table giving the finishing touches to her complexion. One would have said that the artist herself was enamoured of the delicate colours and seductive pose, so adroitly were the arms and torso and thighs warmly and yet conservatively hinted at—the conservatism if not the adroitness of the eighteen-nineties and earlier. In fact, I had a sense of something exotic, physically stirring, and yet at the same time repressed, in picture and artist. Indeed, I thought ! And decided that I would look her up and if possible strengthen this tentative friendship.

But before doing so I chanced upon another Philadelphia derivative of that day—a young illustrator who later achieved current if not permanent distinction in the art world. And choosing to mention Miss Adams and her work, he confided : “ Oh, Ellen ! Sure, I know her. We studied in the same class together. How is she ? Clever, all right ! Lots of grit and pluck, I’ll say ! ” And when I asked as to the why of this last, he added : “ Well, she’s had a pretty hard time of it. Her father is only a street-car conductor and didn’t want her to monkey with painting. I don’t know what’s become of him. He wanted her to work in a store,” he laughed, “ and then she ran away. And one of her brothers—well, you know, family stuff—got in some trouble in connection with a car barn robbery over there. It was all in the papers at the time or I wouldn’t mention it. But it didn’t down Ellen very much. I used to know her in school, you see, afterwards. She first got some newspaper drawing to do over there and now I see her stuff in the magazines. Clever, too. If you see her, say hello for me.” And off he walked, very gay and dapper and assured because of a recent and seemingly durable success of his own.

This naturally tended to fix Ellen Adams in my mind, casting, for me at least, a shade of glamour or romance over

her. For how many girls of that day, handicapped by such a family background, would be fighting a winning fight in art and being as brisk and cheerful about it as was she? Very likely there was a real future before her. Besides, for all her early and difficult experience, she was really so attractive, suggesting in face and form, though not exactly in manner, as I thought at the time, something of the girl before the mirror whom she had painted. Indeed, I thought, might it not be a day-dream of herself as she would like to be? Rich, comfortable, at peace and ease with all the world?

Thereafter one day, being in this mood about her (although, as I discovered in due time, she was in no such mood in regard to me), I called upon her in her studio in the Van Dyck Apartments in Eighth Avenue. It was a lovely warm afternoon in June or July and my excuse was that I was wishing to see how the drawings were progressing, if at all. Somewhat to my surprise, I found her cooking or baking something behind a brightly-curtained corner—her kitchenette, as I learned. And she herself in a light, flouncy dress, partially covered by a bright little apron. Ah, a guest is expected here, I thought. Some male, by damn! Then I am too late or too early. The best I can do is to make this look to be a purely business call and let it go at that.

To my agreeable surprise, though, it was not entirely so. The cake—it was that which she was baking—was for a studio party down the hall. She was baking it for a girl friend, she told me, and gurgled cheerily as she did so. I noted the roundness of her throat and chin, also little beads of perspiration on her forehead.

“I don’t mind cooking,” she commented. “I love it, but not on a day like this. I’m through now, though, except for watching the oven for a half-hour or so. But won’t you sit down? And I’ll get this flour off my hands.” And she disappeared behind the curtains.

Interested in youth and romance and her particular type of beauty, I was especially intrigued by the airy grace and colour of the entire studio world in which she moved here. To think that New York contained such airy, colourful places as this! And with such dream girls as Ellen painting and playing away at life! How I longed to be of it all, yet made

believe that it was business and business only that had brought me.

But presently she returned and showed me one of the three sketches contracted for. And very good I thought it, too. And then because she appeared not averse to general conversation, we talked on and on and I was shown more of her work. Also a girl neighbour—a slim, treacherous hoyden, who entered and posed about—joining in our conversation. I sensed varietism here, a pagan and a gay life of which Ellen and this Miss Gaines and evidently some others were a part. But being too shy—or at least not sufficiently cavalier—to thrust myself into this scene, I was presently allowed to depart the while I was wishing and wishing that I might stay.

One thing and another interfering, I did not hear of or see Ellen again for several years. During this time, however, I learned that she had married a young broker whom she had met here in New York and that they were living in much comfort, and even luxury, in an expensive apartment in Gramercy Park. Sometime later, of a Sunday afternoon, I chanced upon them, in that vicinity, out for a stroll. And a fine, healthy, handsome, carefully dressed and carefully mannered young husband it was who was with her—just the type of person, I now decided, I would have imagined Ellen marrying—instead of me, say—no fool of a mooning editor but a man of practical ability as well as some social position and safe within the conventions and traditions of his profession and social world—most careful, in short, of his manners, money and position. They had a dog which he was leading on a leash. And both appeared to be very happy, or at least I thought so—apparently both well within the flush and pleasure of young married life, content with themselves and all the world. We chatted formally and I learned that there was a baby, a girl. Also that Ellen had not stopped illustrating by any means. On the contrary, she was really doing more of it than she had expected to do at the time I last saw her. Also she was still painting, but not quite so much. Probably, I thought, she had begun to doubt whether she had found herself. Maybe her marriage had done that for her. For I felt that apart from a certain physical charm, this man Wrynn (for that was his name) could have no real meaning for her.

There was that about her which said that she had married him, possibly semi-consciously, for a few very definite reasons. He was young, good-looking, vigorous, and rather illusioned. He gave her a form of worship—sex worship—which she probably required at the time. Also a social position such as she had never known. None the less, as I fancied, this could not be much more than an interlude, or if more, a very dangerous adventure. I could feel it.

Four years more elapsed before I saw Ellen again. In the interim, as I learned from others, several interesting changes had taken place. First, she had divorced her husband, or rather because of incompatibility they had agreed to separate, and he, or rather his mother for him, had taken the little girl, since apparently Ellen wished to be free to paint again. Next, she had since become interested in a young painter whom I had known before ever I knew her—a very serious, slow, and determined person who loved to brood on beauty, landscapes principally, and who sought to interpret them as best he could. Frankly, on hearing this I wondered, because socially, or let us say diplomatically—since a *flair* for things social may usually be described as a matter of diplomacy—this Jimmie Race contrasted so poorly with her first choice. While of a better family than her discarded husband, he seemed to be much more remote from anything and everything which smacked of social show or gaiety. As I saw him, he no more than Wrynn was exactly in the picture with her. He was too slight, too delicate, too slow. She by now, if not exactly robust, was vigorous and dynamic. In art, as yet he was not successful, merely essaying the rocky path to Parnassus, the crown of which he hoped to achieve. Still, and quite definitely, Ellen and many others believed in him. I myself felt that should he continue in the vein then engrossing him, he should most certainly come to be heard of. His studio on Fourteenth Street was a decidedly spare and colourless affair, and he eschewed all but the plainest clothes and fare. In addition to painting he was a student of philosophy and a reader of much poetry, of which he liked to talk. Also he was greatly despondent at times and on such occasions drank a great deal—an appetite which later I came to believe was greatly nourished by his fear or his conviction that he was destined



not to interpret his moods in regard to nature in any great way.

Therefore, as I say, though surprised at Ellen's association with him, I decided at once that she had returned to the field for which plainly in her early youth she had made sacrifice. And such, as I gathered from a conversation I had with her at that time, was the truth. We met at a party, and in a sudden burst of confidence due to drinking, she told me of her ex-husband and her life since last I had seen her. Actually (I am more or less interpreting her here), she could not say why she had married Walter Wrynn. In part, as she said, it was because she was lonely and a little conventional. She had not at the time I first knew her wholly relished the easy Bohemian world in which she found herself, nor had she then rid herself of the, as she described it to me, foolish notion that marriage was the essential as well as the unescapable fate of every American girl. And that, in part, drove her into marriage. At the same time she desired the delight of sex as well as the respect and material prosperity and social advancement that sometimes went with marriage for some. In considering Wrynn, and in addition to being quite infatuated with him at first, she had decided that all of these were to be hers, as indeed they were for a time. Then after two or three years she concluded that almost all of this was a reprehensible illusion or mistake and that it would have been better for her, artistically at least, had she stuck to her painting and illustrating and, *ad interim*, assuming that she must, have given herself to any, or at least one, man to whom she felt drawn. At worst, she might have waited for a temperament such as Race's, about whom at this time, as I could see, she was prepared to enthuse, yet whom she had only seen for the first time six months before. For Wrynn, as excellent as he was, was little more than a handsome and charming distraction which kept her thoughts from what she really desired to do, whereas Jimmie Race, whom she liked very much, but no more than that, was one with whom she could exchange the most intricate ideas in regard to art and, better yet, give as well as receive. Also in the present instance it was Jimmie and not she who had been lonely, and that had intrigued her. Again, it was she who was craving the spiritual depth or sincerity

with which Race out of many at least approached art. She admired him.

Now, however, as I learned, she would not attempt to say whether she was an artist or even destined to be one. She had started so poorly, but she would so much like to try again. And at least now she was not wasting her time matrimonially, attempting the silly business of wife and mother and social flutterings into the bargain, when she had no *flair* for either and was merely making herself and another miserable. For miserable she and Wrynn had been, as she now insisted, and except for their divorce would so have remained, since he believed in the permanency of marriage as well as its extreme value to every woman as an opportunity for social ease and motherhood, while she did not. Worse, there had been arguments as to that as well as regarding her duty toward her baby. But thanks be, she was out of all that now, and the next few years were to tell whether she was to do anything artistic or not. For decidedly, as she insisted, she had an unquenchable and quite consuming desire to paint. Only, unlike some, she would not persistently delude herself as to that, she said. She, and very likely Jimmie Race also, was presently journeying to Paris. There as neighbours and friends—no more—they were to study as well as paint in their chosen fields. And then, well, time would tell. Either she would do work eminently satisfactory to herself, regardless of what the public thought of it, or she would forsake art and turn to something like business or marriage, or anything, in order to avoid being a futile worker in a field already overcrowded with futile workers, as she saw it. I was very much impressed with this conversation (although, as I recall it, she was a little tipsy at the time), and remembered it very clearly for, well, until this very hour, as you see.

But another thought that came to me at this time was this—that Jimmie Race, inclusive of his spiritual elevation and artistic earnestness, was of no real import to her and would not endure, since it was not spiritual elevation alone, or artistic earnestness either, that she needed, but a combination of these with a material strength which she could truly respect, and this Jimmie had not. He was too frail, wistful, foggy. Really she was giving to him of her strength rather than he of his to

her, and what she needed was just that to bring her back to her artistic self. Like Wrynn, Race was little more than a contrary phase to something of which she was heartily sick at the moment.

But now another change. About the first or second year of this contact with Race she and he went to Paris. This, as I gathered afterward, was in the wake of a new and disturbing art movement that had come to life over there and rumours of which were even then (1907 and earlier) drifting to our shores—ructions consequent upon the presence in Paris of certain contesting and yet somehow harmonious groups—Post-Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists, Cubists, Futurists, and what not—whose points of view and general artistic anarchism seemed almost certain to spell the doom of all serious, worthy traditional art. Was the artistic world of Europe really going mad? So cabled and wrote many an art correspondent. And it was because of some hints of this that these two went abroad in 1907, and it was in Paris that they established themselves, in separate studios, as I afterwards learned.

While exactly at this point I should like to descant on this great art change and its significance, I must pause to say that I did not again encounter Ellen until 1912, and during that time many changes in my own life which brought me wandering and free to both London and Paris. But just before that, in the fall of 1910, while walking through one of the large department stores of Philadelphia I had been attracted by four huge panels, all related in theme and progressively arranged above four openings or aisles which led from one half of the building to the other. They were extremely decorative and to my inexperienced eye done in a new and most arresting manner. It has been said that you may not have seen a man or woman or a landscape such as Cézanne shows in his canvases, but after seeing them you can never forget them, for you will see them again in life. I would not be willing to admit the truth of this, but certainly here in this department store and subsequently—(one year later to be exact)—in the Grafton Galleries in London, and subsequently in the studios of Paris (including, by the way, the studio of Ellen Adams Wrynn), I saw many things which were not unakin to these. The panels were—to clear this up a bit—scenes from Parisian life.

One showed an interesting group at the race-course, in most divergent and startlingly coloured costumes, waiting near the rail before the grand stand for the horses to start. The second was early dinner or late tea out of doors, at "the Green Hour," as they say in Paris, before one of the smart rural restaurants of Paris, and presenting just such people as appeared in the first panel, probably on their way home. The third was a street rout or scene in the Bois—cabs and hansoms fluttering here and there in clouds, literally throngs of faces, coats, elbows, legs, hats, upon an adjacent sidewalk, and moving, moving as in a dream. And the last was a mass of dancers in the Bal Bullier, really moving and really dancing, their hats, faces, dresses, bare arms, legs, suggesting a kind of mulch or mush of life. And each panel signed : Ellen Adams Wrynn.

"Hello," I half exclaimed. "Now what do you know about this? Such colours! Such shouting, yelling contrasts!" I was dumbfounded, really, for it was so entirely different from anything I had ever seen signed by her or done or presented in America or elsewhere up to that time, and hence to me most refreshing and even fascinating. So this was what all this palaver about this new French art which she and Race had gone to Paris to study was about. But what a conversion for Ellen Adams and more so for Jimmie Race, assuming that by any chance he had been converted. (As time proved, he had not been.) But gee! The light, the space, the daring, the force, the raw reds, greens, blues, mauves, whites, yellows! Good Lord, no mere savoury impaste here! No conservative and so traditional modulation of tones: no rich couch of underpainting. Instead, all glaring, direct, resonant—a presentation so literal as to be meaningless for some. And yet for me most thrilling, suggesting as it did a sense of life and beauty that in itself constituted an emotion of significance and respectability. And all this was signed very clearly in the lower right-hand corner: Ellen Adams Wrynn! At first I couldn't get it. What the devil? I hadn't thought she was like that—so much force and fire in her. Remarkable. But since when, pray, had she begun to do things like these? And what an amazing development! Frankly, it was all so stirring and provoking that I wished now and at once that I might encounter her once more, or see Paris and all of this.

And then, as I have said, in the following year (1912) I visited England and France and my path did cross hers again in Paris. But before that, in London—at the Grafton Galleries, if I recall aright—I attended the first show of the then so-called Post-Impressionists which was at that time scandalizing, nauseating or amusing all London. Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso and many others whose names escape me now, were represented by one or more examples. I recall pausing in utter amazement before “A Wayside Christ,” by Van Gogh, I believe. “A raw, bloody peasant hung on a pole,” as someone present described it. And that was exactly the way it struck me at first, only with this in its favour, that it was much more in accord with my idea of what a son of man crucified would be than the anæmic and ornately glorified figures with which the Catholic hierarchy has plastered the world. In short, a tortured mass of wood, head, arms, torso, legs, feet. A face the like of which might have been seen on a tortured and none too civilized labourer or convict. Mouth, cheeks, chin, all horribly sluiced by pain. Yet alive with character, powerful or horrible or disgusting, as you will, but character. And the whole rendered in a sequence of high colours. I hovered about, fixed by the artistic cruelty as well as power.

But this was not all. An ancient hag, for instance, the flesh like steel or grey iron, labelled “A Portrait of Miss N.” The nude body of a woman lying on a couch that looked like an arrangement of dirty tin pans strung together in some strange fashion, and jangling. There was also a sculptured head labelled “Rom” that looked like some monstrosity out of a waxworks. I could scarcely believe what I saw. And the assembled throng all curious, nearly all shocked, and full of comments, many haw-hawing after the fashion of yokels at a side-show or before a nude.

And the comments !

“Oh, there is some little something to Cézanne and Gauguin. And I have no quarrel with Van Gogh’s surfaces. Picasso can paint to a certain extent. But as for drawing, harmony ! A child could do as well. I believe they pride themselves in some instances on achieving the child viewpoint.”

Or : “A painting can be a damned piece of barbarism even

if it does manage to attract attention. Loud braying is not singing."

Or: "They insist that they trust to atmosphere to blend raw colours for the eye. But the temperamental blending which the eye achieves is beyond them. They can't draw and they can't harmonize. It's an easy way for people who can't paint to achieve notoriety."

For the moment, as I hereby admit, I was troubled, inclined to agree with some of the remarks I heard. For, as I later saw, I was still in tow to all of the conventional portrait and genre work of the older schools—the smooth, melting, glossy things that fill our galleries and have been our art. Afterwards, when the first shock of this had worn off, I could get neither the subjects nor the method out of mind, particularly the method. And after a while I asked myself: What about these things? Are they not after all somewhat in step with what I actually see here and there in life? Not all is as Ingres would do it, say, or Vermeer. There are strange, trying, gloomy even rancid, effects on every hand. What about these? And what is it that I personally am trying to do? A smooth countess with a white book in a long green lap? A lady absorbed by a Persian bowl filled with orchids? Not at all! And by degrees I came to see that however offensive (like war, say), here was something new, vigorous, tonic. These things, I said, grim and ugly though they may be, most of them, are destined to blow the breath of life into older forms. They will have a great effect. I could feel that this violent, raucous protest against violet blues and delicate draperies was destined to make stronger the art sense and touch everywhere.

More interesting still, though, in this exhibition I encountered a picture by Ellen Adams Wrynn. It was very different from the floreate and I might even say tropic effects of the panels which I had seen in America. It was a portrait of a girl, twenty-four to thirty, say, the flesh of the arms, shoulders, neck and face most effectively and yet swiftly suggested by a few brush strokes. She was seated on an ordinary kitchen chair, part of one knee and parts of both arms only showing. Her red hair was adorned by a black bow. The dress was green with a black edging around the neck. And there was

a bluish-green background with many jewel-like hints and touches in it, yet looking as though it might have been done in fifteen minutes. I liked it. It was one of the few sane, appealing things there, yet obviously in the new manner. So this is what she is doing in Paris, I thought. She has gone completely over to this new movement.

But what interested me even more than this picture was the fact that the friend who had accompanied me to this exhibition was, as he now told me, also acquainted with Ellen Wrynn, her work and some other things in connection with her. He had met her in Paris a few years before, to which place as a life-loving Londoner he frequently repaired. "Oh, yes, Ellen!" he said. "One of your American converts to the new movement. A fairly interesting woman and a pretty good painter, or she used to be—I can't go all of this new stuff. But she and Keir McKail are the best of friends. I can give you letters of introduction to both of them when you go over."

"But I already know her," I explained. "Only who is Keir McKail?"

"You know her and you don't know McKail? That's interesting. How long since you've seen her?"

"Oh, I saw her in America about four years ago."

"Oh, well, that explains it. She must have met McKail since she came to Paris. In fact, I know she did. I met them three years ago. But there is one of McKail's things in the next room if you haven't seen it. Suppose we take a look." And he led a return pilgrimage.

"But who is McKail?" I insisted. "This interests me for various reasons."

"Oh, McKail. Oh, a Scotch artist who has been on the Continent for years. Hails from Dundee. Speaks with a burr. Has a strong, broad trudging figure and a will of iron. He was once an apprentice to an ironmonger, but escaped into art. He has spent most of his life in Paris. And he was one of the earliest disciples of this revolt, but not one of its best representatives. Just the same, a fascinating fellow. Looks a little like a brawny-legged Scotch soldier, but an artist to his finger tips. He's a little tired of playing up to these Frenchmen, I think, but he's not content to return and

paint in Scotland either. Who would be? But if you're going over there you are sure to meet him. Here you are?"

He paused before a canvas. A nude, by the way, quite bony and unattractive, the posture excruciating; a leg raised from the floor in a wide curve; the colours browns, blacks, greys. Curiously, while in the spirit of the new movement, it was not as interesting to me as Ellen's picture, neither as liberated nor as daring or facile. But better painted—the atmosphere, I mean—and suggesting that if the artist worked with difficulty, and certainly without dash, in this field, still he could paint and paint well in another. One could feel it. There was here a certain hard, defiant something that was interesting. I was, as I might say, impressed and yet not really pleased.

But presently my friend began explaining some more: "Since you're interested in Ellen, you'll be interested in knowing something more about McKail. He is more of an artist than she is, to my way of thinking, although he may never establish the fact. He is too sincere and too violent. Why, he has almost forgotten the existence of the old stuff in this really new field already, and yet he painted in that manner for fifteen years. He can't even mention those earlier fellows in this line—Monet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, and that crowd—without cursing. And even Cézanne, Gauguin, and Van Gogh are old masters as compared, for instance and for him, to Matisse, Picasso, Van Dougen and a few others. He considers Matisse the last word as to line, Picasso as a colourist." (He laughed at this, for we had just been looking at two of Picasso's sombre studies. I too laughed.) "He now sees the world and mankind in cubes and pyramids, as does Picasso. The interesting thing is that although he doesn't work well in this field himself, he has imbued Ellen with his ideals, and to my way of thinking, she realizes them better than he himself does. She isn't so driving, so threatening, so uncompromising. And she's more exotic and emotional and sensual—oh, much more. He's really cold compared to her. And so she paints in this new mood with an easier technique and with more romance and beauty. But not with his sincerity and skill. It isn't in her. He paints (like most of these fellows who are making a stir over there



now) as though he were trying to prove something, as though he would like to insult anyone who had ever painted in any other way. *But she paints in this new way because it suits and expresses her, is just like her in many ways, I think.*"

Excellent, I thought ! Then at last Ellen has really found herself and is or will be a success, I suppose. I wondered.

"By the way," I asked, "did you ever hear of a painter over there named James Race ? A young American ?"

He shook his head. "I never did." At the same time he gave me Ellen's address. "You'll find her in the Boulevard Rochechouart—charming place. And McKail somewhere near. They are really living together only not in the same studio. His and her studios are not far apart, though, a block or so. They . . . well, you know. But you'll find him well worth knowing, more interesting in some ways than she is."

A month or two later I journeyed to Paris and having but few American friends there, among the first persons I sought out was Ellen. I found her, after appropriate correspondence, in the Boulevard Rochechouart in the Montmartre region. And McKail nearby, as my friend had said. And right pleased she appeared to see me. Her studio was really delightful, large, airy, gay, with great paintings and startling fabrics scattered on the walls, floors, chairs. And all within one of those old courts so common in Paris, where gate, bell, and concierge combine to effect a certain degree of privacy. On my being announced, as I recall, she came to the head of the stairs and called down to me. And as I ascended, I looked at her. More rounded, more robust, but still very attractive, and smiling, a certain gay insouciance that she never had in America impressing me at once. Ah, development, I thought. She is practised now, more successful, in consequence stronger. Yet little if any of the old charm worn off. Rather her manner, if anything, was more spirited than in her youth. In short, I found very few traces of the raw girl whom I had first encountered in New York.

But what interested me almost as much as she herself now was this studio, or rather its contents. A very pleasant place, with high windows and a little balcony overlooking the wide, clean boulevard. And without and within a sense of the old,

gay, thrifty Paris of the years just preceding the Great War. Unlike her first small studio in New York, where her pictures had been discreetly pushed into a corner, faces to the wall, her walls here carried very large canvases of her own, at least three of them eight by fifteen.

I spoke at once of her panels in Philadelphia. "Oh, yes," she said, quite simply. "I sold them for almost nothing for advertising purposes about three years ago. They were among the first things I did here. Mr. S. was over here and wanted something that would startle the Americans. I wish I had them back now. They aren't exactly as I would do them. I've offered to paint four new ones for them, but Mr. S. won't hear of it. He thinks I want to do them differently, and of course I do." She laughed.

At once we plunged into the new art movement. From the paintings on the walls I could see that not only was she a devotee of the movement itself, but of its greatest and most divergent apostle and prophet, Picasso—the same who was apparently so heavily impressing McKail. In fact, one of the most attractive pictures on her walls at the moment was a pyramidal symphony, or so I might call it—two synchronized dancers, every line and angle accommodated to one or more of the triangular faces of a pyramid. And seeing me looking at it she began :

"Oh, yes, it was not so very long after I came over here that I became a convert. Jimmie—you remember Jimmie Race?—well, he just couldn't endure them and he went back the same year. But after my first prejudice had worn off, I saw how very much more conscious of reality it all is, how much more vigorous and alive. Of course, it is attracting just thousands of charlatans now, but not any more than the older forms of painting have always attracted them, I presume."

"Whom do you consider as leaders in this new art?" I asked, thinking at the same time of Jimmie Race and Keir McKail and wondering about McKail.

"Matisse and Picasso, of course, only I see them as representatives of two different methods, really. Matisse always sees the decorative and makes you see it. He returns to the subject in art and presents it with intensity. Picasso has thrown off the influence of Matisse and gone his own way.

He sees nearly everything in terms of cubes and pyramids." I looked at another of the accentuated pyramidal pictures on her walls. "Yes," she added, "I've gone over to him. I see it that way now, clearly. I hadn't been over here three months before I realized how shallow everything I had been doing up to that time really was."

My mind went back to Race and his quiet method of painting in the old tradition, a method which had once interested her so much. But now not a word about him or that. Rather, presently, and since I had been invited to dinner, she told me that she had also invited for this occasion one Keir McKail, an artist friend; one whose work she admired greatly. And so on, and so on. And it was not long before I could gather from the general drift of the conversation that he was something more than a friend—a warm favourite, one who was a part of her daily life. He had a studio in the Place Pigalle, not so very far away, she said. He was Scotch, a convert to the new school before she met him. He also was very much interested by Picasso. In fact, they had met in his atelier. And presently she added that McKail was really a character—so strong, simple, honest, a little brusque and Scotch, but an artist to his finger tips, as I would learn if I were about him much.

Presently in came McKail, short, stocky, strong, defiant even. And all was as she said. He was—your glen and heather Scotchman; broad-shouldered, a most determined and forceful man of about thirty-five or forty. But what a sharp contrast to Wrynn and Race—so careless this one of his dress and the general effect his manner might produce. I have always thought since that he was almost too sullen and dogmatic without meaning to be so—that is, without meaning to be so offensively. His manner on this occasion was brusque and uncompromising. And by the way he threw his hat and cane into one corner I could see that he was her familiar, the man for whom she lived and worked now, her mental and emotional master, so to speak. Her eyes followed him affectionately and considerately wherever he went or was, which was interesting in her. My London friend had prepared me for all this, yet I was so interested that I soon forgot his burr. In subsequent conversations it developed that he had lived and

worked in many places—Paris, Rome, Munich, Vienna, London. He liked the Scotch but said he couldn't live with them. There was no art sense there, no liberality of spirit. The English he pronounced too self-centred and reactionary. Paris, the Continent, these suited him best.

Having known his predecessors, and from the way Ellen studied him and after a fashion danced attendance on him, I observed him narrowly. And I could see that at last and probably for good she was dominated by one who was not likely to take her too seriously, not he. Race and Wrynn? Pooh! The two of them completely obliterated. It was Keir here and Keir there. Had he seen about the frames for two pictures of his that should have been framed and sent off long ago? Had he consulted with someone—I forget the name—with whom he was supposed to have consulted that day? I must see Keir's studio. It was much more charming than hers. One of these days, if I stayed long enough, we'd have dinner over there. Sometimes they ate there, sometimes here. I gathered from this that although they occupied separate studios they made no secret of the fact that their social life was more or less in common. Some of his belongings as I plainly saw were here and later I noted some of hers there. Sometimes breakfast was eaten there, sometimes here. But most clearly of all I gathered that McKail was the present master of this double ménage; that she was really and truly and deeply in love with him; that he commanded her life and her moods more than they had ever been commanded by anyone.

And yet, too, I had the feeling that after his rough determined manner, he cared for her also, only not quite as much as she cared for him. At least, it wasn't so obvious. He was too silent, recessive, subdued. And, in spite of many conversations I had with him later and when we were alone, I could not make clear to myself whether it was more an affectionate friendship on his part than love. Ellen was a nice girl! he said. Good, too, They found life together so far quite satisfactory. She liked to think that she was doing great things. And in a way she was expressing herself through a medium unfortunately invented by others; but which her warm, rich temperament was tending to turn into

something almost her own—individualizing all that she did. Thus I saw that he was not stingy if not exactly lavish with his praise. Obviously he liked her immensely. They understood each other, he said, and what's more, went about together a great deal. Also that as he saw her, she was a fine, big, intelligent woman.

The best thing about him, as I soon found, was his attitude toward art. For just as my friend in London had explained, he insisted that he had broken away from all of the old forms, and even the newest leaders, and was trying to work out something for himself. And when I visited his studio, which I did several times apart from Ellen, I found that this was true. There were still lifes, landscapes in water-colour and oil, and figure pieces—queer attempts at solidity, mass, depth, often entirely apart from beauty. One of his repeated convictions was that art should not be just a surface ; that it had in addition to length and breadth, thickness, and when well done (inspired) this thickness—or internal solidity, as it were, and the artistic joy which should follow its achievement could be transferred in a mood to another. I confess that the truth if not the joy of his claim got over to me visually in some of his things. Some of his canvases were as large as four by five feet, but for the most part they were much smaller, yet all intensely painted, mainly in sombre slates and greys and greens, so that when you looked at them you began to wonder where all the colour in the world had gone to, why it eluded him so. Indeed, the things he did were done with infinite toil, in a dogged, fighting mood, as I thought ; in short, more to conquer than to paint, to make paint do his will, express his sense of reality. Most of them—as I saw them, at least—lacked the easy sense of line and arrangement, of breadth and scope and joy in colour and form which marked all of Ellen's work. In fact, one of the things that divided their methods completely was his mastery of paint as such—paint that expressed solidity, depth. Another, her love of line and colour, regardless of depth or truth, even. It was her recognition of this mastery of his that caused her to stand in such profound awe of him. In short, as I saw for myself afterward, he could paint better than she could, if with less subject imagination, less *flair*, less romance.

Yet while I knew that technically he was the better painter, I liked Ellen's work best. It was at once less real and more appealing, thrilling in its exotic colour and thought at times. Yet when once a little later I hinted to her that such was my thought, she as much as belittled my judgment. Keir's surfaces were so deeply and solidly built up, she pointed out. They were so true. Naturally, he avoided with almost religious austerity any suggestion of the sterile eccentricities that spoiled so much of the work of others then, but therein lay his true greatness, which at some time or other must be recognized. Solid paint was what he was after—the solid things behind the paint—whereas beneath her surfaces was no real depth. She would like to achieve it, of course, but as yet she had not been able to do so. I had never heard her talk so about any other and marvelled at this new artistic modesty, if not self-abnegation.

During that spring I saw not a little of both of them. Together we saw much of Paris—Notre-Dame, St. Chapelle, St. Etienne du Mont, the Madeleine, to say nothing of some of the more amusing if less spectacular restaurants and dance halls. In so far as their lives were concerned, they did about as they pleased. Both came and went as they chose. He included her in his affairs or not, as he wished, and she likewise. He criticized her work, and that most coldly at times, saying that it was too floreate, too exotic, that she was too much impressed by the enthusiasm and the manners of one futuristic leader and another. She rarely said anything about his things save that they were fine.

Yet there was something here in connection with these two, as I soon found, that was not just art. A physical and most likely even a mental dominance of Ellen by McKail, and yet not against her will. On the contrary, and this after her (in America) previous dominance of Wrynn and Race, which had permitted her easily and without a qualm apparently, to discard both. But not so with McKail. This sturdy and to me none-too-prepossessing Scotchman was plainly as the light of the world to her. She possessed, as I knew, a clear and colourful mind, especially where the syntheses of art were concerned. None the less, and regardless of this, one felt in her when he was at hand a certain not so much diffidence as

diplomacy in regard to what she thought and said. Thus, if at any point he chose to contradict, definitely and dourly as was his way at times, instead of battling with him, as most certainly would have been her way with Race or myself, she fell silent or veered the argument to some slightly different angle which permitted of its gliding off harmlessly. And as for other things—places to dine or a person or thing to visit or see, or a place or time to meet, or how much of this or that was to be devoted to anything—it was McKail and not Ellen who decided. And in the main whether present or absent.

And now I noticed, or rather felt, what I had noticed and felt the first time I visited her in her New York studio in Eighth Avenue. There was a certain homey femininity about her which puzzled me. For how came this unity of something extremely feminine with these quite powerful and almost gross canvases on her walls? For they were not only lush and fecund and floreate—canvases which might well spring of an aphrodisiac mood—but broad and comprehensive and strong; broader and more comprehensive and, as I have said, more colourful and imaginative than anything which came from McKail. Yet, with all this, an exceedingly soft, feminine, and even sensuous voice and manner, a body that suggested graceful rhythms of flesh; eyes, arms, shoulders, neck, cheeks, all speaking of harmonies physical rather than mental. And with these, here in Paris and amid all this work, clothes that emphasized the purely feminine appeal of her—smooth, flowing, graceful dresses, aprons even, and of such delicate textures. And perfumes, traces of them, on her, in her studio. I studied her as much as I did her work, but without the ability to connect the two. McKail and herself I could connect easily, since apart from art they were so essentially masculine and feminine. But this other? I pondered over these two long after I left Paris, could never quite stop thinking about them.

And then—say a year and a half later—from Paris to New York came Amy Jean Mathews, another American painter, writer, poet and lover of life, who during a recent stay in Paris had seen quite a little of Ellen and McKail and their friends. And now she was full of news of a somewhat mixed character.

Three of Ellen's canvases which she had had hung in the last spring *salon* had attracted a great deal of attention. Gorgeous combinations of figures and flowers and draperies and backgrounds of no particular land or time or clime, but breathing of an exotic dream world of her own. And unquestionably more daringly and courageously done than anything else by her so far. To be sure, it was obvious that she was or had been a disciple of Picasso as well as Matisse and others of the Neo- and Post-Impressionists ; none the less, in these things, like Van Gogh and Gauguin and even Matisse, she had achieved something that might be called her own—roundness, richness, mood, fantasy, which was purely personal, a clear reflection of her own skill and fancy. And along this line really remarkable things might be expected of her in the future. The critics were almost agreed as to this.

And Ellen, according to Miss Mathews, had taken great encouragement from this and had been concentrating and working at a great rate, when of a sudden, and in the most unexpected way, the whole thing was overcast for her and made rather tasteless and dead by the fact that McKail, her doughty Scotch companion, had only within the last six or eight months begun to weary of her and turn his eyes elsewhere. Or rather, so it was said, there was another girl—Kina Maxa, a Polish dancer, recently arrived in Paris and much talked of for her art. She was young and intense. After creating a stir in the music-halls she had been sought out by Ellen, who desired to paint her. Diplomatically or from a varietistic point of view this was bad, for it brought Kina in contact with McKail, who as instantly also desired to paint her, although he did not say so, then—only subsequently he did paint her many, many times. In short and probably to Ellen's chagrin and despair Kina succeeded in changing his artistic viewpoint and that not a little, causing him during the next few years at least to paint her and others in, if you will believe it, somewhat the mood if not the manner of Ellen. And what could be worse? What was it really, love—or hypnotism—or the hypnotism that is love? The exact truth was that Kina had conceived of a fiery fancy for McKail as he for her. After a few weeks, according to Miss Mathews, there had been secret meetings—a discovery of the



same by Ellen Adams and then despair. For at once, after his forthright and almost realistically cruel fashion, McKail was at no pains to conceal this sudden change of heart. In short, after a flat confession of his views he disappeared with Kina and was not heard of for some time. And then only to say that he was in love—and gone no doubt for ever. And so there was Ellen, alone and distrait. And my friend Miss Mathews had already evolved the theory that perhaps it was Ellen's success rather than the Polish new-comer's different if not superior charm that caused Keir to change. But that I doubted. His was neither the nature nor capacity that could easily admit, let alone be convicted of, defeat at the hands of a woman. On the other hand, because of ample proof of his domination of Ellen in times past and his bare and highly dogmatic toleration of her flamboyant mood, he was not likely to envy her her success with that. If anything, it seemed to me, he was more likely to have deplored it for her sake. If he had changed, it was more likely because he was fascinated by another type.

But in as far as I was concerned no direct word from Ellen or McKail at any time. And so eight months more. And then one day a letter from Ellen. It was dated Paris some ten days before and inquired rather smartly as to art conditions in America—who were the principal dealers, how much of an impression the futuristic method had made there, whether I thought an exhibition of her painting to date might not be arranged for her by me. She had done many new things, improved greatly. More, she was thinking of coming back for a time. She was a little fed-up on Paris. A line at the bottom added that at present McKail was in the south of France. Nothing more.

I wrote her what I knew of the New York field. It was only fair. The French art revolution had not as yet captured America by any means. It would require time, if anything, to educate America up to this new phase of art. Whereupon seven more months of silence. And then another letter. This was from London. She had left Paris some four months before. In the interim, or since writing me, she had married—an Englishman—and removed to London. McKail—well, McKail had left her, had become interested in another love.

To be sure, she had intended to come to America, but about that time she had met Mr. Netherby and was now very happy, painting and arranging an exhibition of her things in London. If I was coming over at any time I must look her and her husband up.

To say that I was astonished is putting it mildly, for I was convinced after seeing her in Paris with McKail that she was not likely to be happy with anyone else. There are certain combinations, for a woman at least, which instinctively you know are right. There are certain powerful, sturdy men who take and bind certain sensuous, male-loving women as with hooks of steel. It makes no slightest difference that there are moderate variations in viewpoint or that the woman has certain gifts which the male has not, or the man has certain tendencies which the woman has not or of which she can in nowise approve. It is those very differences, maybe (and the greater, often the surer the appeal), which bind a given pair. At any rate, in the case of McKail and Ellen, it had been as plain as anything that artistically and emotionally she was his slave. Decidedly she did not copy him as much as she might have under such circumstances, but distinctly and because of his strength and his deep and defiant convictions, and not otherwise, she was moved and sustained in those superior art emotions which now showed in the brilliant canvases which I so much admired. Nor did it make any difference to her that he did not consider them as significant as his own. To be able to do them she needed that substratum of intense and even heavy reality which was of the very body and mind of McKail. As an artist Ellen rested on McKail as on a rock, and from his heavy but sure physical base took her flight. Besides, no doubt she adored him for what he was, and this gave her the zest for what she was, no more and no less than a spiritual emotion of himself, a flowering out of his convictions in regard to self-expression plus a Neo-Impressionistic French art movement and her own colourful and exotic mind. If my psychologizing is worth anything, this is true.

But now here she was married again, and after Wrynn, Race and McKail, I could truly feel the force of the blow that had stunned her. For now I could recall, as though she might have been brooding concerning them herself, the two

bright studios, the one in the Boulevard Rochechouart and the other in the Place Pigalle, the high windows, the differing canvases, the happy-go-lucky arrangements for now a breakfast in the one place, a dinner in the other or in one of the city's colourful restaurants, and with Ellen looking so Frenchy and youthful in her smart walking suits and McKail so sturdy and shepherd-like. Verily, it must be a dark hour that she was enduring, the sprightly Pole who had enticed her love from her hovering as a black fancy over the desolation of her former gay world.

And then, not more than a year or possibly nine months later, came another letter. Things were very bad in England, artistically as well as otherwise. It was the war, of course. One was called upon to do anything and everything but paint, and yet paint was all she was interested in. Otherwise, things had not changed any since she had written me, but she was coming to America ; in fact, would be here within the month. The foreign market and atmosphere had been so completely dissipated by the war that she was going to try living and working in New York. Did I know of a good studio which had any sort of atmosphere or was part of a neighbourhood that had ? (I recommended Washington Square, of course.) Could I introduce her to any interesting current personalities who might advise as to art here, or rather the exhibition of it ? Her husband was not coming now, could not, but would come later. (I thought not a little as to this, for I knew that she had never left McKail willingly.)

And then within the month she did appear, and I saw a woman not so much physically as spiritually changed from the one I had known in Paris and New York. Interestingly enough now, she was even more in the mode than she had been in Paris—due, I assume, to the absence of McKail, who in Paris had argued against any fixiness or teasiness in the matter of dress. And anyhow, here more than there her whole get-up bespoke an effort to make the most of her charms. And I wondered as to that.

Soon thereafter she took a studio on Sixty-fifth Street, one of a number in the building housing the then famous Healy's all-night restaurant that occupied the ground floor, basement and some private suites beneath the studios on the upper floors.

As all who know pre-war New York will recall, Healy's was a centre for actors, artists, musicians, and literary people, to say nothing of bon-vivants who kept the taxis in that region clattering between ten at night and four in the morning. The spirited wails of flutes and violins that were to be heard, if faintly, even in the topmost studios of this place, one of which was Ellen's, probably suggested Paris to her. At any rate, here she was and here, as I soon found on visiting her, she had stacked quite all of the best things of her Paris period, to say nothing of a number of others done recently—only, as I could see, not nearly as good—neither so colourful nor so spirited. We went over all of them together, with the result that I told her that all she needed to do was to persevere (perhaps not even that), to get recognition for what she had already accomplished.

One of the difficulties of her present situation, as she now pointed out, was the fact that here as well as in England the Great War was backgrounding all art. To be sure, America was not yet in the war, but the effect was almost the same. In England she had been unable to do anything at all. The one showing she had made had not brought her anything. People were not interested in things artistic. Here in America, things were almost as bad. The normal buyers of art were now buyers of Liberty Loans, and art critics and art lovers along with painters and poets were being drawn to the front. Such exhibitions as came and went did so without a ripple of interest. Sales were arranged and gone through with, with, however, most of the treasures "covered" and returned eventually to the sales-rooms unsold. You couldn't get money for art treasures any more than you could get fame for any but war artists—painters of trench charges and aeroplane onslaughts.

Nevertheless, as I now noticed, Ellen entered briskly enough upon her campaign—first to make a suitable exhibition of her pictures; next, to recapture her interest in America and if possible in life, which was the ill that was actually besetting her. Industrious she visited all the principal art dealers who managed exhibitions, but, as she told me, found them cool. Too many war troubles. It would cost her a pretty penny just to show her pictures for a month, and prices in

other ways were soaring. And as she now confessed, she had not married a wealthy man. It had been a "love" match, "and these things, as I knew, were rarely, if ever, connected with money." I wondered as to the "love match" or why marriage at all. For presently she was about with as hectic an art and Bohemian group as could be assembled in New York at that time. More, she was drinking, and in a sort of abandon of spiritual misery, as I fancied at times. For occasionally when she was thus chemically fevered, she would give way to comments on the uncertainties of life, and even art. One started out, as a girl, say, with such definite ideas of what might be accomplished, in life or art, but neither ability nor the lack of it or enthusiasm or the lack of it guaranteed one either failure or success. This war now—how thoroughly it had upset or deflected all art values for the time being!

And once she added, in a burst of bitterness, but just once, that there was this trouble of her long and close relationship to McKail. She had fancied, or rather thought she knew, that they were temperamentally as well as affectionally so closely, almost permanently, allied. Yet see! Both—not McKail alone, as she was careful to emphasize—had drifted apart. Yet this, as I knew, was but camouflage on her part. McKail, not she, had drifted. And in so doing had brought about for her a sense of not only confusion but of possible futility, since not only was her youth in the main gone but artistically she had not as yet achieved that secure position which from the beginning had been her dream.

And then one more little thing. I met an Englishwoman who had known both Ellen and McKail in Paris, also her new husband in England. And she was full of a discrediting wonder in connexion with this marriage. Why, of all people, Sherard Netherby? A most insignificant and unimportant scribbler and critic who hoped in a rather indifferent way to shine later as possibly a—well, she scarcely knew what, maybe a dramatic critic. But full of flamboyant and exotic notions of what it meant to be a real artist! He also had been in Paris and had known McKail, and no doubt at the time as well as now it seemed a great thing to him to succeed McKail and to possess Ellen. But she? Of what had she been thinking? To spite McKail? To seek to drown her misery

in the company and arms of such an unstable and mentally unsound creature as Netherby? It was too ridiculous! To be sure he had family. But family—to her—it was too little. And it could not possibly last. Unquestionably she must be sick of it already, and was no doubt over here now to escape the irritation of this new frying pan.

This criticism tended to illuminate Ellen's current restless and erratic mental and emotional state as I was observing it. None the less, through various acquaintances, letters of introduction and the like, she sought and finally succeeded, after a fashion, in generating a small social if not art interest in herself and the things she was doing. Several critics were invited to her place for tea, and she contrived introductions to others. Sincerely interested, I commandeered three and took them to view her things. Critic-wise, they expressed doubt. She had come back without any final stamp of foreign public approval and she had not made a public exhibition of her things here. It was therefore a matter of time. As I saw it, she would have to make up her mind to wait.

But it was rather by her mood in regard to herself and life than by her art efforts that I was now impressed. Although born here, she seemed now to be out of touch with America, and life, too. And in spite of the fact that she had already accomplished a very great deal artistically, she was unbelievably depressed. In her studio, in so far as I could see, she worked very little. Rather—and this was so unlike her Paris mood—she seemed to be intensely anxious to meet men. Perhaps fundamentally it may have been a keen desire to meet some one man of force or distinction, or both, in the walks of the arts who could again enchant her. (That undying human dream!) But despite all those she met—writers, professional men of various walks, artists, critics—none appeared to affect her. Rather, during her stay of over eight months here, there was this feverish search for something, with no art work that I could see being done, with no conviction that she would remain here or that she wanted to remain here, with no suggestion of anything worth while that might be awaiting her in Europe, with no mention even of the English husband. Once, and only once, while looking over some sketches I came across one of a tall, pleasant, and yet very conventional-looking

Englishman, the officer type, who appeared to me to suggest some, not too much, culture and refinement. "And who is this?" "Oh, that is Sherard, Mr. Netherby, my husband." "Oh, yes, to be sure." So passed husband—in and out, as it were, an obviously not too interesting subject.

And then finally the following note. Or rather here is part of the note. "I fear I am permanently weaned from America. I can't stand it any longer and am returning to London. Since my plans are unsettled, I am leaving most of my paintings with Ursula J——. But I have told her that you might wish to select a few that have always interested you. You might as well have them for your walls, if you wish. I cannot take them along and hate strangers to have them, although some will have to be stored. I can't even give you a permanent address, but I'll write you." When I tried to reach her by telephone she had already sailed.

Thereafter, six months' silence. Meanwhile, acting on her suggestion, I had selected ten of her most interesting pictures and hung them as she wished. Then a note from London. She had quarters there but was going to Sweden for the summer. Again a long silence. Then a letter a year later asking after the paintings and telling me to please look after those that were still in storage here. Also she added that she had resumed her maiden name, Ellen Adams, and gave a new address.

Two years later, another letter. No real news. She was still in London. Were her paintings all right? (They were—all except the storage dues.) Still another year and another letter giving a new address—in Paris—and saying that presently she would have her paintings sent there. But they were not sent. Another friend, someone in Philadelphia, had been asked to take them out of storage and hold them. But mine (some of the best) were never asked for.

In the meantime I had looked up Ursula J——, in whose care Ellen had at first left the major part of her paintings. She was an American illustrator who had studied in Paris at the time Ellen had been there, and knew both McKail and Ellen quite well. At the time Ellen had left I had gone to see her but had not troubled to discuss our mutual friend. She seemed too reticent to invite any confidences. But after this long time and Ellen's continued indifference to her paintings

(ten of them in my possession, one hundred and twenty in hers), she seemed more willing to talk. Why had Ellen returned so suddenly to London? Why had she left all her paintings here so long? Why this astonishing indifference to them? What had really become of her?"

"Well, don't you really know? Didn't you ever meet Netherby?"

"No."

"You have seen her sketch of him, though."

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I know that, but her indifference to her career, her paintings lying around here! I should think she would want those."

"So would I. They are beautiful and they ought to make her. But they won't. She isn't interested in them or herself any more, and so they won't. It takes belief in oneself as well as one's work to do that, and I fear Ellen hasn't that belief any longer. They are mere unhappy wraiths of her past. They have no one to speak for them."

"But she has a genuine gift for painting. The things that I have are splendid."

"And these that are here with me. But Ellen's through, or until she finds another man like McKail she is. That was a case of genuine love on her part. And she will never replace him. She doesn't want to. And until she wants to and does, she will never paint."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Not at all. The truth is that art was just a door to happiness for Ellen. She could always paint. She can now, better than ever if she only wanted to. But she won't. Her sole aim is to achieve happiness. And the only way she can do that is to paint for someone she loves. But she can't love and paint unless she can respect her lover mentally and artistically, and the only person whom she had ever really respected and adored artistically is McKail. He was her life, her inspiration, and he is to this day, I think. When he left her, she quit. It wasn't worth while without him, and apparently it never has been since."

"Blew up!" said I.



"Artistically, yes. And yet, Ellen is really a wonderful woman. She is so big and generous and sympathetic. And she can paint. Only I don't believe now that she would ever have painted as much or as well as she did if it hadn't been for McKail. She was mad about him. A friend of ours who was in Paris at the time McKail left her tells me that she all but lost her mind. She moved in a kind of daze for months. And he said that if it hadn't been for Netherby, who came along about that time and offered her sympathy and care, she might have gone mad. He finally persuaded her to return to England as his wife, and later she left him because she could not forget McKail. She told me so."

"I guessed as much," I said.

And then later—much later—McKail himself—hale, successful, determined, achieving an art exhibit here, selling not a few things and then returning to France. But without Kina Maxa. She had left him. And his pictures now speaking almost exotically of her! Upon my life! I said. Yet in all our conversation scarcely a word about either Ellen or Kina. In short, only a word or two about Ellen—none about Kina. He came to my studio and there were her pictures—a few. And looking up he said, "Oh, Ellen, to be sure. Four of her best. I often wondered where she left them. She should have kept on." But no more. Not another word. No "Where is she?"—nothing. I stared. Almost talked to myself.

Only Ellen's departure had taken place almost fifteen years before. And the paintings delivered to me and Ursula J—are still unclaimed. And no word—nothing—from Ellen Adams Wrynn.

**LUCIA**



# LUCIA

## PART I

**H**ER father was a Russian, her mother English. She was born somewhere along the Riviera. Following her birth her mother became an invalid—or at least believed she was—and moved from one health resort to another with the faith of a religious fanatic. But in spite of her travels and contacts with people of various temperaments and morals, as her daughter Lucia once said to me, she remained cold and unsympathetic to life's pleasures, shunning wines and even the mildest of social flirtations. She had no least understanding of the nuances of love-making, said her daughter; Mother considered children to be its sole aim and end. Since specialists had told her after the birth of Lucia that she must never have another child, she considered her marital obligations discharged for life, and gave her husband only a sisterly companionship, which, however, she never allowed to interfere with plans for nurturing her own health and that of her child. For she did try to give her daughter every advantage of health and education, exercising eternal vigilance over her physical and moral well-being and engaging the most expensive governesses rather than submit her to the risks and influences of normal school life.

Unfortunately, and as is so often the way in such cases, Lucia resented this close guardianship and, cruelly enough, gave all of her affection to her father, who idolized her. Unable to find happiness with his wife, this particular benedict came and went, constantly driven away from her and back again. He had been a General, so his daughter said, the youngest in the Russian army, but his wife had persuaded him to give up active duty and travel with her. This they were able to do because they both had money of their own, and the world had seemed to offer endless adventure before she developed her unreasonable preoccupation. But one of her strongest convictions was that she could not be well and happy in Russia.

Perhaps it was something in the free, barbarically-coloured spirit of its people that hurt her English conservatism.

Sometimes, said Lucia, they would spend a few weeks in the summer on the country estate of her husband's family in Russia, but not often—an enormous wooden house with a great wooden platform and steps disappearing into a lake of grey-green, uncut lawn, with pine forests beyond. Lucia loved this place, she said, and always would. It was one with her own temperament—wild and free. When her mother got heart attacks and headaches and wanted to leave, she would beg to stay on with her father, at least until fall, and so she spent several summers there alone with him and a few old family servants. Always she looked back on these times as the happiest in her life, she said. Love—so-called sexual love—was never able to duplicate or attain the degree of joy, admiration and understanding which she felt in those days with her father—riding through the forests in the early morning, walking over the rough fields in the long, northern evenings ; or curled beside him reading by the fire at night. Back with her mother again at Bad Nauheim or Pau, she would long fiercely for her father, hating herself for being a girl and having to live with her mother, and start counting the days, crossing them off the calendar, till Christmas, when always he came with Russian presents and stories of boar hunts and how the old place looked after the first snow, with the peasants' children coasting down the long sloping fields.

Always before he came, though, Lucia and her mother and the current governess—they didn't stay long with such an ungrateful child as herself, she once said—would go to Paris and shop. Her mother, as she said, ordered lovely dark dresses that made her look very sweet but older than she really was. Lucia rebelled at standing for fittings, so her mother bought her hand-embroidered, smocked dresses at Liberty's, white for best and blue for every day. But as for her own choice, she said, she always felt more comfortable in the plain sailor blouses and skirts she got by the dozens in Germany : white, with blue anchors embroidered on them, for summer ; and dark blue, with red anchors, for winter. More, unless her mother protested that friends were coming to lunch or she was invited to spend the day somewhere, she wore them constantly.

But one occasion stood out in her memory which embittered her for ever against her mother's taste. She was almost fourteen. It was two days before Christmas and at an hotel in Rome. Her father was expected to arrive on the eight o'clock train, and they were dressing to go to the station to meet him. Her mother had presented her with a new dress that cost 1,000 francs in Paris. It had a round neck and two little bunches of flowers exquisitely embroidered on the front. Suddenly she noticed that the dress emphasized the budding curves of her young figure. The thought of becoming anything but a small edition of the father she so idolized infuriated her. Red with anger at nature and herself, she started to tear off the dress, when her governess coming in tried to stop her. A terrific argument ensued. Lucia was ashamed to tell her real reason for disliking the dress. Her mother, failing to understand, threatened firmly, though tearfully, that she could not go to the station unless she wore the dress. Fortunately just then the telephone bell rang. It was her father's voice. He was downstairs, having made better connections than expected. In a few moments she was in his arms, sobbing away her troubles.

After Christmas that year, her father, so Lucia said, persuaded her mother to accompany him into the African desert. And true to character, as Lucia said of her mother, she insisted on taking along the latest governess for Lucia, since she considered the child too old to be left unguarded for a moment in a land of scheming Arabs. Although Lucia was really fond of the governess, a pretty, dark Italian of possibly thirty, she hated the idea of her mother trying to make her prudishly sex-conscious. It resulted only in driving her away from one parent and closer to the other, who took life so much more naturally.

One night, after Lucia was put to bed, so she said, her father, within her hearing, suggested a trip through the native quarter of Tunis. The local sheikh was being married and there was to be some unusual dancing. But his wife felt too tired to make the effort. He therefore invited the governess. The next day Lucia found her mother weeping in bed and threatening to leave for France at once. She refused to see her husband, who stood outside her door perplexed and

miserable. Frankly he told Lucia that he and the governess had come home rather late the night before, and found her mother pacing the room in an hysterical rage. She had insulted the governess, who was now packing her things preparing to leave. He himself was going to take the poor girl to the station and pay her a month's salary. Lucia was to come along with them.

She always remembered, she said, the ride in an old-fashioned motor to the station on the outskirts of the town. It threw such a strong white light on the difficulties of marriage—or the relationship of at least one father to one mother. She sat between her father and the governess and held a hand of each. The woman was crying softly, and when she got to the station refused to take the extra salary. Father said he would send it to her. On the way back home her father kissed her several times very tenderly, and she was very happy because she knew that in the next few days that would be required to calm her mother's nerves, she would be to him the consolation that he needed. In consequence she felt very grown-up and sorry for both of them.

That summer, according to Lucia, they went back to the Russian estate for the last time. It was early in May, 1914. The birches were beginning to turn green and the woods were full of blue wild flowers. But by June her father was already talking of sending her and her mother back to Switzerland or Holland. Always in touch with inner military circles, he knew that talk of war had been growing stronger and when the Archduke was murdered it was a certainty for Russia. At the end of June therefore he put his little family on the train with the promise that he would follow them in a few weeks, as soon as he had settled certain business affairs. But the call of the old military life grew too strong for him. He went back to his regiment and was enthusiastically reinstated as General. His wife, terrified and pessimistic, predicted only ill, whereas Lucia was wildly proud of him. She wrote him every day, crazy little love notes, she said, that afterwards they found among his military orders. His wife wrote only to beg him to come back to them.

After the mad first war week in August they heard nothing of him. Lucia used to run down the mountain-side every

day from their chalet above St. Gervais, to ask for mail and wait for the morning telegrams to come over the one wire in the town. One hot afternoon the first week in September, at the sight of a tall, powerfully built man in knickers, with a knapsack on his back, toiling up the hill to the chalet, Lucia threw herself headlong down the mountain path. It was her father. He had succeeded in having a dangerous secret mission assigned to himself on condition that he could spend a week with his family. Posing as a trapped tourist, he had made his way through Germany, tramping most of the time and depending on his wits for food. But he had secured the information he was after, and now for four days Lucia was to have the joy of his presence.

When she next saw him it was winter. A telegram from head-quarters in Petrograd informed them he was being sent south on sick leave. They went to the Black Sea to meet him. The minute after the train pulled in, they saw him waving gaily to them, but just the same when Lucia's mother saw his face she clutched her hand convulsively. Lucia herself could not believe anything could happen to him. But two days later, she stood beside him while he died. She could not really believe then that death was real, she said, but when she finally did grasp what had happened, she went to a little balcony outside the room and stood there. Just below under the balcony was a glass enclosure. When she thought about it afterwards she could not say that the idea of suicide was actually in her mind, any more than her mother's sobs and the explanations of the doctors. She only asked to be allowed to stand there, while in her mind, quite far away but real nevertheless, was the noise of shattering glass.

After the first few weeks Lucia discovered, she said, that even grief such as hers does not last in continuous intensity. She was surprised that sometimes now she could think of pleasurable things, even of her future occasionally. But also she determined to preserve her grief, because it was the most precious thing she had. The ragged edges of it she soothed with a sudden belief in Fate, and the long grey stretches of it she tasted and flavoured with every tragic book and poem she could find. Outwardly, according to her own account, she was cold and indifferent, really cruel to her mother, considering



her very different brand of sorrow a cheap, childish sentimentality. On the other hand her mother did her best to break the mood which Lucia had built around herself, and took her on a tour of all the famous and beautiful places in Italy, since that country had not as yet joined the war. But all was coloured by the girl's dark mood. Later—too late, she said—she was thankful to her mother for having given her these beautiful settings to her spiritual sorrow, and when tragic events overtook her later in life, she felt she could not suffer with the same concentration and reality that she had felt after her father's death. It was as if at that time she had burned out some cells of her emotional batteries and never again would she have to respond so vividly to the torture of living.

When a friend of her mother's suggested sending her to boarding school, Lucia leaped at the idea, seeing more freedom for the indulgence of her moods. Her mother, bewildered, protested at first that she could not let her out of her sight, but finally gave in, and October found Lucia unpacking a trunk of regulation uniforms in a very severe Huguenot school on Lake Geneva, housed in a large wooden chalet on the top of a long, mounting field. Lucia, so she said, loved this field immediately, because it reminded her of the uncultured lawn in front of the old house in Russia. Also the view down the lake toward Montreux became a symbol of lost, unattainable beauty. Then she would look over at Evian, across the lake, and her mind would jump back of it, up that valley that marches to St. Gervais, and she would vision a man tramping up the hill to a chalet, and then tramping down again.

The grounds of the school were perhaps fifteen acres, including part of the field, a small pine grove and an abandoned vineyard at the end of a long *allée*. The girls walked up and down this *allée* in the daytime as much as they liked, but after dark they were supposed to stay on the gravel paths around the house. Almost every twilight, however, Lucia would manage to slip down under the black shadow of arched trees to the edge of the vineyard. Here was the platform of an old summer house that had been blown away in a storm, together with a view of a mountain peak beyond, and here she would sit and

look across the lake at the peak. She dared stay only five or ten minutes, and even then the quick darkness and the whisperings in the trees and vines often frightened her. But when she got back to the lighted school hall and bowed her head for evening prayers, she felt secretly exhilarated, as if she had kept a rendezvous.

The rules and routine of lessons interested her. Whenever they aggravated her, she said, she tried to think she was in an army and must work hard to become a General. Far ahead in some subjects and far behind in others, she found herself, on the whole, a disappointingly average mind in class compositions and exercises. In sports she was a little above normal. She made friends easily, but always avoided gatherings of more than two or three girls as boring, because she had already acquired the habit of acting differently with different people, and a crowd made her feel negative. Her room-mate, as she recalled for me in trying to explain her life, was a bright, pretty girl, whom Lucia liked, though she could not understand her. For one thing, she seemed to have a strong moral sense regarding the school rules, while on the other hand she thought nothing of getting letters from boys; even confided to Lucia that two or three had kissed her. Lucia, obeying most of the rules as she said because it seemed the pleasantest thing to do, thought this strange of her room-mate, even evil, but when it came to something that she herself really wanted to do, like running down to the vineyard at dusk, she did not hesitate. But she had never kissed a boy. The thought was far from her mind, although occasionally, she said, she had visualized some tragic, passionate romance for herself in keeping with the sombre and fatalistic literature she adored. But she had never really anticipated the details, such details scandalizing some sense of hers, not moral, perhaps, but æsthetic.

Twice a week, according to her, the girls spent the afternoon in making bandages and dressings for the Red Cross. During this time articles and stories about the War were read aloud to them, of course carefully expurgated and purely heroic in appeal. In between-times they knitted sweaters and various articles, and as soon as one was finished and wrapped, its maker was allowed to write a little note to the

unknown soldier who would open the package. According to herself Lucia wrote the funniest little stilted notes, filled with *would-be consoling remarks on Fate and expressions of tenderness that sounded more like some bitter-sweet old maid than a healthy young schoolgirl*. Also she quoted passages from the Bible, the Rubáiyát, Oscar Wilde, and what not else, books she had found in her father's home. But she took these notes as a solemn responsibility and always pictured the unknown soldier reading them the night before his doom. She considered it childish and ridiculous of her room-mate to add little crosses for kisses at the end of her effusions.

Nevertheless, she felt an indefinable longing for something that would give and take affection. One rainy November day, therefore, from one of the walks which along with the other girls, and two by two, she was allowed to take down to the village, Lucia brought a stray dog back to her room. To conceal him she tied him under her bed, where he seemed quite content to sleep, and at supper she slipped some of her meat and bread into a pocket for him and also gave him water out of her wash-bowl. And when she got into bed he curled up on top of her feet. He was quite a large dog, a brown, shaggy terrier, and writhed with affection when she patted him. During the night it got very cold and rain blew in over the bed. Lucia pulled the dog under the sheets with her. The next morning the sun was shining. The dog jumped out of bed, refreshed and happy, but unfortunately Lucia could not quiet his yelps and bounds. These brought the sisters who heard, and the dog was compelled to leave. That night though Lucia could not sleep for a long time for thinking of the dog—his homelessness—fate. And she explained to me that she said to herself very darkly and dramatically, of course, I am a tragic person, and no doubt it would be silly for me to have a happy, brown, shaggy dog. Life cannot intend such a thing for me. But I wish he had a good home and I wish I would fall in love, so I could prove that I am worthy of Fate. (What she meant by being worthy of Fate was hard for her to explain, but principally, as she said, she had an idea that only people who suffer and have strange things happen to them are worthy of being alive.)

It was after her first holidays, after a terrible Christmas

with her mother, as she said, who took her to Paris and wanted to do everything but leave her alone with her memories of past Christmases, that a strange thing happened to Lucia. The afternoon following her return to school the sun shone in a heavy, gold mist. There was a warmth in the air that seemed almost ominous for January. At four o'clock the girls were supposed to play hockey, but suddenly Lucia was seized with a desire to see her mountain through this luminous mist. With hockey stick in hand she ran down the *allée*, through the crackling leaves, to her platform. The lake was covered with low, drifting clouds; above them, the Dent-du-Midi stood up like an iceberg in the ocean. Lucia dropped down on the platform and leaned on her knees. Suddenly she heard a rustle; someone was coming down the *allée*. She looked and saw two figures, both in the garb of the Huguenot sisterhood. They were walking toward her. She had time to hide, but curiosity kept her looking. One of the figures was Sister Berthe, the music teacher, who lived in the next chalet, but the other . . . Lucia thought she had never seen anyone so thin. She looked like a fasting monk Lucia had once seen in a monastery near Ravenna. The cord knotted around her grey gown swung against her skirt as if there were nothing under it. As they came nearer, Lucia saw that the stranger's face was pale and thin and her eyes very dark. She looked like some illustration out of Baudelaire or Poe. When they reached the end of the path, Sister Berthe spoke. "This is what I wanted to show you," she said. And then Lucia realized that this stranger was going to look at her view. More, she felt that this wraithlike being would know at once what it meant. If only Sister Berthe would melt away. . . .

At supper Lucia tried not to look around the room. She heard a girl say: "Queer looking new music teacher." So, she would live in Sister Berthe's cottage, which also served as infirmary and had practice-rooms for the girls who took piano lessons. After supper Lucia went down to the edge of the pine grove which hid the music cottage. The lights were lit inside. There was a lamp lighted in one of the practice-rooms under the eaves. That must be the cell they had given the new sister. Lucia wondered if they had given her a bed. Of course. One of those iron cots, probably. And yet Lucia

could easily imagine that white, emaciated figure sleeping on straw, like a monk.

From the very beginning Lucia realized, so she said, that she would never be able to define the feeling she had for this frail strange sister whose name turned out to be Agatha Thiel. She was Alsatian ; had studied music for many years in Germany, but had to give up a promising career because of threatening tuberculosis. For some years thereafter she had lived in a sanatorium, supported by a brother, an architect in Paris. He, however, had been killed in the first weeks of the war, and after that Agatha wanted to be a nurse. But the doctors told her she must live an absolutely quiet life. A Protestant by birth, her friend Berthe had then persuaded her to join the order of the Huguenot sisters and help her with her teaching in this sheltered spot.

This was as much as Lucia could ever find out about the new sister, or so she said. At that time she thought of writing to her mother for permission to study music, but later decided that would be too much. Dante had never spoken to Beatrice, never even touched her hand. Hopeless adoration had not died with the Middle Ages . . . the capacity for suffering that made you "worthy of your fate," that was all that mattered. This was Romance and Tragedy that walked before her now, and even smiled with those terribly dark eyes at the child they so often caught staring at her.

On her sixteenth birthday Lucia's mother sent her presents and a large tin of *marrons glacés*, very difficult to get in those war days. Lucia took the tin over to the music cottage on Sunday, when the girls were allowed to pay calls. She knocked at Sister Agatha's door, but when it opened could not remember what she had planned to say. Instead, as she told me, she merely handed her idol the tin, mumbling something about not liking *marrons* herself and wondering if Sister Agatha . . . Yes, Sister Agatha was very fond of *marrons*, thank you very much. Would she come in and sit down ? No, she had to call on some other teachers. And Lucia, trembling with joy and fury at herself, ran to the vineyard and sat there all the rest of the afternoon. If I could only speak to her, she said she thought. But how can I ? She is in a seventh circle and I am in a second. She could understand me, but I could

never make her see that I understand her. It was, so she said, like listening to a sad, sublime concert. After it is all over you desire to rush up and say something to the artist, but there is nothing you can think of that does not seem insipid and banal.

So the months went by. Lucia was happy because she was suffering pleurably. Hers, as she later recognized, was an exotic, sensuous and sensitive nature already boiling with its own pent-up fires. Almost every evening, as the days grew longer, she now explained, she would manage to pass Sister Berthe and Sister Agatha walking together in the *allée*. The latter's smile would give her a new interest in her work. She was studying Gothic architecture at the time and reading the literature of that fantastic period—Aucassin and Nicolette; Héloïse and Abélard; the Crusaders. All her free time, therefore, she spent delving into more or less forbidden tales from the library of the town, or else in drawing, of which she had grown passionately fond. Her sketches from life, so she declared, were really worth while. She preferred, however, to draw scenes of lovers, parting or killing each other. And once she made a very careful copy of the doorway of the cathedral at Moissac, with its hollow-cheeked saints, abnormally long-legged and with their knees crossed, grouped under delicate, straining arches. Sister Agatha, the music teacher, wanted to hang it in the main schoolroom for a while, but Lucia was afraid someone would notice that all the faces were alike. All resembled Sister Agatha.

At the end of the year her mother appeared to take her to Spain for the summer. But she made her mother promise she could come back to the school next term. Sister Agatha was coming back, too. The season in San Sebastian seemed wickedly gay to Lucia, in view of the fact that a war was going on. Still, she was pleased when one afternoon a good-looking man followed her from the beach and inquired most obviously about her at the hotel desk. A few days later he made a formal call on her mother with a letter of introduction from an English friend of hers and asked if he might make a sketch of Lucia. He turned out to be a well-known artist, very polite and well mannered, and because of that, though carefully chaperoned by her mother, Lucia posed for him.

He called his sketch "Prima Vera." One day when her mother left them alone for a few moments, Lucia told him she resented this title, as she had already lived and suffered. But he only smiled at her very engagingly and suddenly kissed her on the mouth. "You charming child," she said he said, as she turned away. Half indignant, half pleased by her first kiss she gazed, then walked away uncertain as to what else one did under such circumstances.

There were several young men whom her mother considered presentable enough to introduce to Lucia, but they did not interest her in the slightest, nor did she seem to interest them. She was too thin, and wore her black hair too straight, and talked about such serious things, like Dante or Bernard Shaw—her latest find. Lucia felt at this time that if a man loved her she would not have to talk to him, and if he didn't, there was no use wasting time and energy thinking of things that would interest him. She wondered if the artist were in love with her. If he is, she thought, I will have to tell him that it is hopeless; that I am in love with a monk. But the artist disappeared as politely as he had come, and Lucia was glad when at last it was September.

She insisted on getting back to school a day or two before it officially opened, she said. Her hope was to be able to talk to Sister Agatha before the others arrived. She found her looking as pale as ever, but her smile seemed less sad. She had not yet donned her grey cloth uniform but was wearing a dark red silk dress, very long, and knotted about the waist. Lucia thought she looked like the young novices who carried the incense at High Mass. But all she could say to her was silly talk about San Sebastian and how glad she was to get back to school and see the mountains again. The next day they were both in their school uniforms again.

The school year went by, and the summer following Lucia's mother had a nervous breakdown. Whether intelligently or not, as Lucia said of herself at the time, she held the thought that maybe it was an effort on the part of the maternal body, not necessarily the mind, to attract the attention of its strange, indifferent daughter. A meditative, speculative psychologic soul, as you see. At any rate, Lucia felt she had to remain with her instead of returning to school. Besides, now she was

almost eighteen and had finished practically all of the advanced courses of the Huguenot school except science and mathematics. Undoubtedly, though, as she said, she thought at the time she could go on studying drawing better in Paris. And, Sister Agatha being fixed at the school, she could always return and visit whenever she wanted to. Despite the war her mother's finances stood the strain surprisingly well, the father having left a quite large fortune. So they rented a small house at Versailles, and Lucia was allowed to fit up one room for herself as a studio. Two voluminous black embroidered curtains her father had brought once from Tiflis and the sketch of the cathedral doorway at Moissac—no one here would discover the resemblance to Sister Agatha—were the only decorations. And that November after the armistice she began a course at the Beaux Arts, taking the bus to Paris every morning and returning at four, and so gradually began a new phase of living.

## PART II

Paris after the Armistice. A great climax and a great anticlimax. People sat around in cafés wondering what was going to happen, no longer expecting the crash of bombs nor waiting for the casualty lists to be posted. But nothing happened, and they were bored. They were reunited but they were disappointed. It was hard to work now that a tremendous pressure plant somewhere had stopped supplying energy.

At the Beaux Arts also the same spirit prevailed, said Lucia. It came in with the air from the street, with the thoughts and memories of those who had had relatives or lovers in the Great War. Most of the instructors had war records and medals, and taught almost mechanically. Art was no longer so terribly important.

But Lucia, so she said to me, wanted it to be. It was so meaningful to her, so beautiful—so sure and great a way to express the deeps of oneself. No ordinary girl, this, as you see. So she threw herself into her studies with the zeal of a young scholarship student whose bread and butter depended on her success. Yet it was three months after she started, and only at the persistent request of her head professor, that her mother finally consented to have her study the nude. The



only difference that this made though, as she said to me with a sly, revealing smile, was that now she could bring her sketches home and work on them there. She had already been taking "life" for three months and had made remarkable progress.

From the very first, though, as she also explained at this point, Life had come natural to her—doubtless a reaction against her mother's puritanism. Also she grew to be good friends with several of her daily companions. One or two of the boys asked her out in the evenings, but she could not go because her mother insisted on her getting home on schedule. But she went to luncheon with the boys instead, discussing art or the war, and always steering clear of personal subjects. They hardly expected more of her. She was so young-looking for her age, childishly slim, and wore her hair and her clothes so plainly. *The only intimate friendship she formed was with a Russian girl of her own age, but who looked much older and carried on several more or less sophisticated flirtations with pupils and professors alike.* Her name was Olga and she lived with her parents, who had managed to escape before the revolution with most of their fortune. Lucia often went to their apartment for lunch, and was happy to be able to talk her beloved Russian. Olga preferred to be considered French, but her parents clung to their traditions, and grew very fond of Lucia, particularly Olga's father, a handsome, iron-grey-haired man who soon paid Lucia, so she said, much more than fatherly attention and tried to kiss her whenever they were left alone. More, he often took the girls to exhibitions, and occasionally, with the hard-fought for permission of Lucia's mother, took them to a gathering of artists in the evening. Lucia's mother refused to go with them. She was always too nervous or too tired to make the effort. Seeing she could win no real affection from her daughter, she had gone back to her old mania of health cultivation and with the aid of new and very expensive doctors managed to pass the time fairly well—or so it was that Lucia phrased it.

Lucia, as she said, gradually began to resent this eternal supervision by her mother. Here was this young Olga frequently going out with boys, even with those of whom her family disapproved. She would, as Lucia saw, always get one of the students of whom her family approved to call for her

and take her to where the other boy was waiting. One of her companions in crime was Henri, pale, thin, aristocratic and poor, really charming if weak. Lucia wished she could have such a good friend as this, someone whom she could have fun with without his wanting to kiss her or pretend to be in love. She preferred the companionship of men, but did not know how to go about getting it. The thought of kissing someone you were not in love with seemed ridiculous—not immoral—she would not have cared about that—but simply pointless and æsthetically shocking. She would, as she thought, wait for the ideal, maddening love, which from reading as well as observing the youth of the world about her she was beginning to understand. Yet curiously enough now, as she afterwards noted—not at that time, the attentions and kisses of Olga's father were not as repulsive to her as the attempts of younger men. There was a sort of gallant devilry about him, as she explained to me, that appealed to her. But the companionship she desired with boys of her own age did not seem to come her way.

Finally, toward the end of the winter, Olga arranged a birthday party. Lucia was to spend the night with her and Henri was to take them to a big charity ball. For the first time, said Lucia, she dressed herself to look like a grown-up woman. Olga arranged her hair for her, lent her ear-rings, powder and lipstick. She wore a black evening dress that was really a tea costume, with the sleeves ripped out, but it looked very well on her slim figure. Henri called for them with his brother, a pale youth of sixteen. The four got into a cab, and with much chatter and giggling, drove to the nearest cabaret, where Olga left the brother smiling with a hundred-franc note in his hand as a reward for service, and from there the three continued to the apartment of one René Chalet, Olga's latest conquest.

Chalet was a tall, dark aristocrat of the automobile business. His apartment was small but in excellent taste. Lucia, as she said of herself, was unsophisticated but not stupid. She soon realized therefore that Olga had been there before. It was the first time, she said, she had felt sure that her friend was not a virgin. As a matter of fact, Olga afterwards told her that René was her first real lover, although that night she

pretended to be as blasé as the most skilful *cocotte*. Lucia was not shocked but a trifle aghast and uncomfortably conscious of her own innocence. She seemed, as she said, so inexperienced and out of it, youthfully speaking. After several champagne cocktails, though, they went to the charity ball and had a very good time. Henri was a good dancer and acted as though he enjoyed Lucia's company, even though she told him that she was afraid she could not love him as much as Olga seemed to love René. He told her that she was beautiful and he was happy just to dance with her. René, too, was surprisingly appreciative of her looks and dancing.

After several bottles of champagne, René said he would like to show them the real night life of Paris. They went to a night club in Montmartre which was then the smartest of rendezvous. It set Lucia's imagination on fire. Obviously all these people here were lovers, but did they all love each other? How could that beautiful little thing love that fat, greasy-looking fool; or that handsome old lady love that silly-looking boy she was kissing? Was love, after all, as important as having a good time? Then she shuddered at the thought of a person with a soul letting such ideas run through her head. She ought to feel sorry for these poor, unromantic puppets. Yet she was having a good time herself. It felt nice, so she said, when Henri held her close, and it wasn't so hard to tango after all when you had had a lot of champagne.

After a dance they came back to the table to find Olga and René had gone. There was a note scrawled on the menu. "Meet you at home at five." It was now almost four. There was some champagne left and they finished it, lingeringly, between dances. Suddenly Lucia said she felt terribly sad. She wanted to cry. There was nothing in the world for her, really. She would never love anyone the way she had the burning, wraith-like Sister Agatha. She had been mocked by that strange passion. After it so much of all this seemed nothing, nothing, and she sat and brooded concerning it all. . . . When Henri stroked her arm and kissed her shoulder, she did not mind. Who was Henri? What was his significance to her. He only made her sadder. Finally they took a cab to Olga's apartment but there was no one there as yet and they had no key. They waited downstairs until almost six o'clock.

But Olga did not come. At last Lucia sent Henri away and walked up five flights of stairs—the little electric elevator would make too much noise. Perhaps Olga had come home before them. On the landing outside the door of the apartment she sat down. It was terribly cold, she explained, but she didn't mind that. She was too wide awake. And now she wished she were back in Switzerland, where maybe she could tell Sister Agatha the way she felt. If she could only see her. . . . She began to shiver from cold and loneliness. Was that a grey shadow above her on the landing? Maybe it was a ghost. If only it was a ghost that would speak and say: "*Dashinka*, tell Dunya to light the fire; I'll be in as soon as I have seen to the horses."

Finally she said she could stand it no longer. She knocked at the apartment door ever so lightly. A long wait. Then she knocked again. A quiet footstep and the click of the lock. She almost fell in, too exhausted to be surprised when Olga's father took her in his arms. "How pale you are, my child!" he whispered, and carried her in to the little back library where a bed had been made up for her. He started to help her take off her dress. She was too tired to notice what he was doing. When she protested, her dress was already off. He began to kiss her, wildly and quietly, all over her shoulders and back. She struggled, but did not cry out. She fell back on the bed, still fighting him off. Then suddenly, she said, he knelt down and hid his face in her hair, gasping in a funny way as if he were suffering. In a moment he got up, very calmly as if nothing had happened, and kissed her gently and went out. When he had gone she burst into wild, stifled sobs. She was miserable, utterly miserable. Finally she lost consciousness. . . .

When she woke up, it was noon. She lay in bed wondering what had happened. Nothing had really happened, and yet the whole scheme of things seemed different. Olga, her best friend, had a lover, and Olga's father had tried to seduce her. Did he know about Olga? Would he want his daughter's best friend to have a lover? Was sex something different from love? Would she ever want the one without the other?

After that, because he was so courteous, undemanding and genial, Henri and she became very good friends. Without

approaching any romantic intimacy themselves, she said, they discussed love and sex and their friends. This was very good for her, as she saw it afterwards. Gradually she acquired confidence in herself, dressed with more care and began to look attractive as young girls go. Young men now noticed her, and she very seldom had lunch alone, although her mother still made too much fuss to make going out in the evenings worth while, except occasionally when she could stay with Olga. Also she began to feel more at ease with men. Even Olga's father no longer frightened her. His attitude was just as it had been before that extraordinary morning—one of easy gallantry—perhaps a little more daring because now Lucia no longer fought off an occasional furtive kiss.

Always, though, as she said, she had been thinking of and planning on a visit to the school on Lake Geneva. The strange, wan, ascetic-looking Agatha was always the lure. Finally, the week after Easter she did leave. Her mother saw her comfortably installed in a non-smoking compartment where she would not be likely to be annoyed by men passengers. Then Lucia said she settled back, quite happy and independent, but with a queer feeling that something was going to happen. After Fontainebleau a tall, gaunt Frenchman got into the compartment. He asked her if she would mind his smoking, and when she said no, offered her a cigarette. She had only recently begun to smoke, and this stranger made the pastime seem unusually exciting. They talked about all sorts of things, about books and art. He seemed brilliant and deep-natured. The sort of man I might have been able to care for, Lucia said she thought—a, for her years, ridiculous but absolutely sincere reflection. At six they had dinner together, just before the train got to Dijon. There he had to get off. Suddenly, in a perfectly natural voice, he said: "Mademoiselle, you are charming. Why don't you get off and spend the night with me at Dijon? You can wire your friends in Switzerland that you have been delayed a day. Dijon is really an interesting old city. I would like to show it to you." Lucia was shocked, but delightfully so as she said. Then men did think of her as a sophisticated woman and attractive, a great step forward as she saw it. She said she said no, but in such a way that he would not think she did not remotely consider accepting.

At the school she did not go at first to the music cottage. After talking to her old friends and teachers for over an hour she managed to ask casually : " Is Sister Agatha still here ? " " Oh, yes, just the same as ever." It was all right then ; she had not changed ; nothing had changed. She waited until they took their evening stroll. The dead yellow leaves still crackled underfoot in the *allée*. There they came, two figures, one of them unbelievably thin in her long, grey robe, a cord knotted around her waist. Suddenly Lucia said she felt weak and ashamed—she who had kissed men and begun to doubt the power of love. Yet they were only pleasantly surprised to see her and told her she was getting to be quite a young lady, and how did she like Paris. She was sorry she looked changed now, she said, and wanted to say : " Don't you see that I am just the same hopeless fool ? " Instead she chatted automatically about the Beaux Arts and her mother, and explained that she had to leave the next day. A moment later, at the end of the *allée*, looking at her view, she realized that there was nothing she could ever do about it ; she would never be able to express to anyone this strange thing that had lasted so far for two years.

Soon after she got back to Paris she met Carlos. He was really the first man who paid her serious attention, and she could not help liking him. He was tall, good-looking, a wonderful dancer. His father was Spanish. His mother, a rich American, had divorced her husband and spent her life seeking fun as Lucia's mother sought health. Carlos looked and talked like an American boy. Lucia's mother approved of him and let her go out with him at least once a week. Of course she did not realize that Carlos was Spanish by temperament. Later in the season the two mothers took their children to Biarritz for a month. They would not have opposed a romance between the two or even an elopement. But all Lucia and Carlos thought of, so Lucia said, was having fun. Although Carlos thought he wanted to marry her, he was quite content to dance around with her, excitingly near the edge of an " affair," as he imagined, but yet not really.

Lucia, as she said, was now rapidly developing a thirst for life and adventure. She was also, at last, delighted by the thought that she need not envy Olga or feel that she was

hopelessly innocent and awkward. While not physically changed, Carlos, a thoroughly disillusioned young man, had already told her all sorts of interesting things, trying to seduce her by awakening her curiosity; "he even described various amours to which, he said, I drove him because of my maddening virginity," recited Lucia. Yet she only enjoyed kissing him and dancing with him. In sum they danced so smoothly together that they were often taken for professionals. Yet somehow, in taxis and hallways, even in the pine woods outside of Biarritz, she could not give Carlos more than kisses. Perhaps, as she said, out of her struggles with him she derived a sort of pleasure. But it always made her terribly sad and sometimes then she drank a little more than was good for her and would lose her self-control and burst into tears. Often though when she reached home after a night of gaiety, as she explained, her elation suddenly transformed itself into despair and she would lie awake until daylight attempting to think things out. There was no reason for acting the way she did, she argued, and yet not going one step farther. And yet there was that wavering grey figure, with a cord knotted around its waist, that could not be eliminated.

Thus it went on, according to her, almost all that next winter, almost for a year. She studied very hard at the Beaux Arts, but there was no use denying that art was not the only important thing in life. On the contrary, more and more she awakened to the intrigues and romances of people around her. After all, as Olga used to say, the war was over; it was up to the young people to profit by the death of stuffy old principles and get more out of life than their mothers who were disillusioned when it was too late to enjoy themselves. Lucia said she now felt this deeply. She had even a horror of being thought narrow and prudish like her mother. In the spirit of her day—so strangely different from the period that had immediately preceded it, she would rather have people think she was a prostitute than a virgin. She even told Olga that she was having an affair with Carlos. Yet every time she was alone with him, it was the same old story. He would take her home, the inevitable struggle in the hall, then the rest of the night spent in thinking. And he, if he was not too tired, would see if Florence or Collette were at home—or so he said.

Yet all this time, according to Lucia, she was slowly but surely acquiring sophistication and poise. She longed for life so ; did so wish to know which was the fullest and surest way. And, too, as she added, at least some people were beginning to wonder just what her morals were—a tribute, as she saw it ! Also, between evenings with Carlos she had several flirtations, but did not come any nearer to succumbing. All told though, as she said, she had a very good time, though she never felt quite happy. Mainly she enjoyed feeling that her heart was desperately looking backward and failed to find any new emotions as strong as the old.

But the following summer she decided on a new course. Here she was, almost twenty. She wanted experience and emotion. There was no use waiting for real love. She had had that—the perfect harmony and companionship with her father ; the strange exaltation induced by Sister Agatha. Now she wanted the experience of physical love, even though she could not have it with a spiritual or æsthetic side. When she danced and drank and flirted she wanted it. But all that over, she wanted to test her own spirituality. Perhaps some day experience would satisfy her and show her she had been wasting her time thinking about the soul ?

Well, there was Carlos, but he, as she decided, was too nice or trivial to experiment with. He would take it seriously. Perhaps she would find herself drifting into marriage with him. And that was the last thing, as she now explained to me, that she wanted. Marriage ! It was ridiculous—the death of freedom unless an enormous love repaid one for its limitations. Rather, and particularly at this time, it was her mood that she must keep her independence and a level head. To that end therefore there was Olga's father, who still hovered around. But might not that make things awkward with Olga ? Apart from him there were other men, of course, who appealed to her in various ways but not enough to make her decide. Finally, there was a young and handsome doctor to whom she went to have a tooth extracted. He gave her gas, and when she was coming back to consciousness, she said, he sat beside her in the darkened rest-room and stroked her hair. When he asked her how she felt, she said, " Oh, it was a wonderful feeling, just to stop struggling and forget everything." He



looked at her a trifle surprised. "I hope Mademoiselle will find that sensation a little later in life under more pleasant circumstances," he commented and with an enigmatic smile. Suddenly she said she felt that maybe this man would do. "I know what you mean," she said, trying to sound very casual. "I have had a lover, but I am looking for another one." Now he looked even more surprised, and asked if he might take her home in a taxi, but she had to tell him that her mother was coming for her. She gave him her telephone number, and for several days she lived in anxious expectation. Should she decide on this man? Where would they go? What would she wear? He was a doctor, and would know what to do. Besides, Olga could always be consulted. But he never telephoned. That caused her to fall to speculating most uncomfortably. Had she made a mistake in mentioning that she had had a lover? But if she had admitted that she was a virgin, as she argued, men were so afraid of being taken seriously. Olga had told her that. And if they wanted to be taken seriously, they expected a lot of sentimentality and that, after Agatha, she was not prepared to give.

But soon after that Henri, still a good friend, took her to call on a comparatively old man who lived in an enormous attic on top of Montmartre. He was an inventor. The room as she described it to me was filled with funny little models cut out of cigar boxes—machines principally. Worse or better he was a big, shaggy-looking man with stormy grey eyes and an impatient voice. Henri had confided to her that he had a terrible reputation with women. All his life he had seemed a magnet for them, and that interested her. Besides, once she saw him, the boreal or viking character of his body as well as the wonder of his eyes fascinated her—young as she was—and however great the difference in their ages she decided then and there that he was marvellous—youthful in spirit, wise, gay, attractive, a kind of shaggy god left over from an older day. And beside him—near him—how lovely and exciting would be her beauty. She thought all this and more, she said—on sight! Over a covered divan in one end of the barn-like room was a striking drawing of a naked woman, almost indecent, as she thought at the time, except that it was so well done. There were other people there

for tea. Yet her host paid no attention to Lucia until she chanced to admire the picture. Then at once, she said, he started to talk to her with easy flattering familiarity, praising her taste and asking if he might see her own art work sometime. She promised. When she left he asked her to come again, saying he was always at home in the afternoons, doing all of his serious work at night.

This man, as Lucia said, fascinated her. Contrasted with all, including Agatha and her father, he seemed important, even beautiful. Besides, Henri had told her that he was really a genius—any day he might become world-famous through his inventions. Lucia therefore gave him serious thought. For here now was a man who attracted her physically; who was over fifty, experienced with women and intriguing mentally. True, to him she would be just another woman; but, also, there would be no danger of complications or entangling sentimentalities—no marriage. She was sure she could extract happiness from this strange contrast and decided that she would call on him the next week.

But it was four weeks later before she achieved sufficient courage to ring the doorbell of "D. Sarvasti, Inventor." It was four o'clock of a gloomy November afternoon.

### PART III

Usually, as Lucia told me, she took a taxi at four after her last class at the Beaux Arts and got out at the foot of Montmartre. Then she would walk up the winding street to the inventor's study. Even if it was raining she did not want him to know that she had spent the six or seven francs on the taxi ride, because, as she had discovered at first, he was very poor and her situation was the reverse—so she felt ashamed. Actually, as she insisted, she had never come in such close personal contact with poverty before and especially where she was so vividly interested by one who was so poor. It was a discovery as well as a thrilling sorrow to find out that so great a person could often go without food for lack of five francs, in short, live on small, uncertain sums and great hopes.

This therefore was a vastly greater experience than what she had found that gloomy November afternoon when she

called for the first time. Yet when she thought back on the actual hymeneal hour, as she told me, she felt only disappointment. Maybe, as she said, it was because she had already been seduced, so to speak, by books, by art, by Carlos, by Olga's father, by the man who was going to Dijon, even by the undemanding gentleness of Henri, by her passion for Agatha. At any rate, and however, and as young and inexperienced as she was, there had not been so much left for Daniel Sarvasti. Not certainly as much as he deserved. For the truth was that despite his æsthetic fire he was terribly old and tired and desperate about life, yet, as she said, tormentingly hopeful about himself. Although he was in his middle fifties, he was at least sixty in every other respect except that of self-confidence. His faith in his creative power and in the eventual success of his inventions was the only thing that burned in him ; that and sometimes the pain of hunger. At times, of course, he had made various and even considerable sums of money, but as soon as he had any money he poured it into the perfecting of expensive models of his ideas. And so far only one of these had reached the stage of commercial production. At that, a rival inventor had to buy his patent in order to perfect a new type of turbine engine. This rival offered to take Sarvasti into partnership for the manufacture of this machine. But Sarvasti could not submit to the compromises of business ; as a partner he was impossible and was eventually paid off with sufficient cash, as he thought at the time, to let him live in the realm of creation, practical or impractical, for the rest of his life. More, he had bought this old house where he lived and fixed the top floor into an enormous attic work-room. Yet in this he had finally to live most of the time, and worse, rent the rest of the rooms, for he had nothing else to live on. But as he told Lucia, night was the only time when the wheels of his mind whirled incessantly. Then and then only he must hammer and saw at his little pieces of wood. Consequently, the only lodgers he could keep were queer people like himself, workers by night ; watchmen, professional dancers, dope peddlers. Even the supply of these was occasionally exhausted. Roomers came and went without his knowing and so without paying. Finally, in an attempt to tide him over a suicidal mood, which, to her

inexperienced astonishment one day developed in him, Lucía herself, with the aid of Henri, rented two of his rooms, and Daniel never knew the difference, except that then he was able to invite Lucia to dinner and once even to take her to the opera !

And so Lucia, who had chosen Daniel as the easiest source of experience of the kind she was seeking, found herself swept into an alarmingly different and dangerous situation. For soon, of course, it appeared that Daniel's affairs with women were mostly things of the past. There were girls of the "quartier," and others, who came over to cheer him up when he got too desperate, but the same did not necessarily imply more than a liberal camaraderie. And yet because of the dramatic and sympathetic fascination he had, and strangely enough continued to have, she now found herself playing an important part in a new kind of Bohemian drama.

For how different this was from the pseudo art life that centred around the young people of the Beaux Arts. For here was a group of men who, while not primarily artists, were workers of one kind and another and all preyed upon by some dream of achievement and yet all too poor to enjoy creative idleness. Sarvasti himself, as she often said, never really found mental peace, though he slept all morning and wasted most of the afternoons with friends or with Lucia. To him, or so she said he said, she was like a visitor from another sphere, with her freshness and her pretty clothes and her unsuppressible curiosity. And she extracted great joy from seeming just that to him—and dispelling in part at least the depressive need and sense of approaching age that so oppressed him. "I wanted to appear an angel of light to him," she once said to me. "And so I really think I appeared, inexperienced and self-interested and almost wholly selfish though I may have been."

Daniel took an almost impish pleasure, so she said, in surprising her with all sorts of tales, heavily realistic most of them, but all still charged with an Arabian charm most fascinating to her. He had led such a varied and eager life, too long and too varied to picture here, but full of many real or imaginary or exaggerated adventures. From the amorous Carlos and others she had hitherto only heard idealized details of life, but now Sarvasti's were different—realistic. Yet

charming though she was, and I can attest, and physically most alluring, his interest in her was largely platonic. The truth was, of course, that long before her coming he had worn himself out physically. Hence Lucia learned very little about sex from actual experience, and was disappointed. On the other hand, there was an attitude of age-old sophistication in Sarvasti, as she said, a trace perhaps of Greek degeneracy that had been left two thousand years ago in the soil of his native Crete and which gave her a new perspective. He loved to dress and undress her, as she said, almost as though she were a child, at the same time making believe that they were ancient Cretans at a feast? They would have wine and cheap little cakes and then allow their imaginations to run wild. Sometimes Daniel wanted to play at love-making in rather roundabout ways, but strangely enough, Lucia, with all her curiosity and emotional capacity, could not respond to desire that was not blind and unpremeditated. Mentally she was willing to accept it, but her young blood was stronger than her mind and rebelled against anything not of its own temperature. Daniel, as she explained, felt this. He was by no means insensitive, and in consequence was almost always content to admire her youth of mind and body, drinking from her voice and the sight of her what had been drained out of his own spirit.

As the winter went on, though, and the difficulties of this situation increased, or rather as the novelty faded, Lucia said that she began to realize that sooner or later she would have to get out of this. It could lead to no enduring union and yet, as she also said, she did not trouble to build up any defence against the growing demands of her strange lover. He was too interesting and colourful. Besides, as she argued, or said that she did, he needed her so much more than she needed anything, that it seemed unbelievably cruel to resist or deny him. Life for all his great nature and dreams had repaid him with so little. And for all his age he still desired so much—and so youthfully. And she sensed that, too. Yet also, as she admitted, it was not unselfishness wholly that kept her trying to help him, but rather the weakness of her naturally sensitive nature, which was always responsive to the lacks as well as the weaknesses of others. For did she not

have youth, and beauty and wealth in plenty and need she be so saving so soon? She did not. Besides, as she said, she could not help seeing his point of view, sensing the tragedy of his too futile struggle against age and poverty. And as opposed to this she had no point of view of her own as yet, only an eagerness to get something out of life as quickly as possible. And this plus an inborn and apparently inescapable taste for the tragic kept her sympathetic and so in attendance on him. In a sense, also, as she once explained to me afterwards, here was an ideal experience, from the angle of the "æsthetics of life," if one may use such a phrase. That is, here was a picture of sorrow as well as something more—genius in distress. And here in her was beauty, its anodyne. And the combination was not only poetically dramatic but memorable as beauty, or so it seemed to her. Hence æsthetic. And so into her mind sprang the truth that a picture or story or piece of life, however tragic, even sordid, is not necessarily lowered but rather enhanced in art value by such a relationship as this—given a special kind of form or dignity, appealing and even grand. And with that I agree. And yet here again, as she said, something stronger than her mind rebelled.

However, it was not until one evening in the late spring that Lucia even suggested straining these bonds of intimacy. They were walking in the Bois at the time. Lucia was officially spending the night with Olga. Suddenly and in a quite impish mood and more to see the effect on him than anything else, as she explained—sadism, you see—she found the courage to tell him she was going away for the summer. "My mother has found a very cheap *pension* in Bayonne," she explained. (Her mother had really engaged a suite at a hotel in Biarritz.) But she never wanted him to know of her comfortable station in life because she was proud of being valuable to him merely because of herself. Before the words were out of her mouth, he turned on her. "What? Are you going to abandon me? And just now when I am beginning to find life again? When you first came to my work-room I was hardly interested in you. I was poor but not really miserable; resigned only because then I had not met you and never expected to meet your like. But then you chose to come, to show me your soul, your young girl's

soul, and give me new life, like a sudden breeze. I did not want to hurt you. I have always respected your funny ideas. I even begged you to go away before you aroused a painful thing like love in the heart of a half-dead old man." (Alas, this was true, as she said, but it had merely thrilled her at the time with a sense of the dramatic.) "But you stayed," he went on, striking furiously at the bushes with his cane, "and twined your soft, silly little arms around my neck until now I am caught in your sweetness, like a fly in honey. And now you think you have given me enough and want to go and leave me to crawl like a fly with its wings broken!"

He always talked like this, she said, beautifully, tensely, gloriously, whenever he grew emotional. It affected her emotionally, and deeply. As he spoke, she said, the scene widened, the miseries, the intense, bitter needs of life—all life became so vivid. And Lucia, as she also said, could then feel herself as two separate halves, or beings. And thinking—each half—thinking: He ought to be a writer and then maybe he wouldn't be so painfully unsuccessful—and with the other half, struggling with real tears and saying: "Why, Daniello, how can you talk that way? You know that I love you. You know it." (It was not the first time he had forced her to exaggerate.) "I am not going away for good, only for two or three months; my whole life is being with you and helping you just as you help me." (He was always interested in her sketches, she said, and she had really grave respect for his inventions and had always tried her hardest to think up intelligent questions to ask about them.)

"I have given you all my soul and strength," he went on, she said. "I have not thought of another woman. I have given you all the tenderness of a life full of experience and love. But how can you appreciate that, you a restless little child? What can you feel? What have you experienced?"

At this Lucia said she felt hopelessly incapable of answering as well as hopelessly like a cheat since, ultimately, as she knew, she would leave him. Yet to soothe him for the time she said: "But, Daniello, darling lover, I tell you, only for a little while. . ."

"If you really loved me, nothing in the world would make you leave Paris even for a month when you know I need you so much," she said he said.

"Then I won't go, dearest Dano; I won't go," she said she exclaimed, for his emotion rang too real. She could not bear to see him suffer so, as it made her too uncomfortable, although as she also well knew if she did not end it then, they would have to go over it all again a little later. Just the same, and regardless of all this, she made him stop walking and threw her arms around him—"silly little arms," as she afterwards said to me, "hanging on to something that was bound to sink."

Two weeks later, though, she could not supply her mother with any more excuses for not packing and so had to take the matter up again. Besides, it was almost six months since she had had any just plain, silly, happy girlish fun. Daniel had made her see life too seriously. She could not deny that a desire had been growing in her to get away from that one powerful personality, rhapsodic though it might be, and indulge her own little whims and moods once more. "With him," she once said to me, "you always had to play second violin, perhaps because he was a genius in personality if nothing else, and yet . . ." The only way she could do it, as she finally decided, would be to stage a scene, and get emotionally wrought up before he had time to be. In regard to this, as she also said to me: "It is a shame that people can make you lie to them so, isn't it?" "Yes," I said, "it is."

But here is the way she described the parting scene.

It was a bright summer morning. All her plans and dreams for her new days had been thought out, but apart from him. And there in his presence—and because he chanced to be whistling cheerily as he opened his door to greet her: "Dano, darling, I have something terrible to tell you! Mother almost started another nervous breakdown last night, and the doctor says I have to take her away, right away, to-morrow. I told her I couldn't possibly leave Paris, and she threw the most awful fit of hysterics. I told her very well, I would take her to that *pension* in Bayonne and then come right back, and if she doesn't give me any money to live on here, I'll get a job . . ." She stopped for breath, she said, just as Daniel stopped whistling and stood glowering. But before he had time to speak, she went on: "Of course, it will just kill me to leave you, even for a few days, dear. Oh, what will I do?" And



then she threw her arms around his neck, as he so loved her to do, because as she said she knew, it made her seem so small and helpless to him. And so sure enough, she forced him to soothe her instead of starting a scene himself.

"You can come back in a few days, precious child," he consoled eventually, "and live here with me." "And then," she added, "he tenderly carried me over to the couch and kissed my hair. Only suddenly, then, I started sobbing, real sobs, not because I did not want to leave him, but because I realized I did."

From Bayonne later, of course, she wrote to him that her mother was worse and that she could not come back yet. He was to write her care of the post office in Bayonne. Her mother had given her a baby Renault, so she could run over from Biarritz quite easily and get her letters. And what strange letters his were, she said, written in an almost illegible hand, short, impetuous, sometimes adoring, sometimes insulting, like Daniello himself.

Yet, as she said, it was fun going out again, dressing up and dancing. But, and although she no longer had a hard time interesting men, still it did not occur to her then, as she said, to start any serious affairs, since, as she most definitely insisted, she still considered herself Daniello's, even though she was taking a vacation from him.

But one day in the beginning of August following, she received a letter from him, only two lines, which said: "It is better to cut quickly, like a surgeon performing an operation Good-bye."

It swept over her then, as she said, and most painfully, that she was selfish, disgusting, not to appreciate the love of a real person, a creator, one who was suffering while she danced. Besides, as she added, he was ending it all—not she. What now of her art and her soul? Did she not have either after all? To save her own soul, as she phrased it to me, she this time played a trick on her mother. She left a note on her bureau saying that Olga had wired her that she was very ill, and took the night train to Paris.

When she got to Daniello's work-room, she found Rita, one of the girls of the "quartier" she had met there before. And for a moment, as she said, she was almost relieved. For,

maybe this meant that he was really through with her. But at sight of her Daniel almost exploded with joy, taking for granted that she had come to stay and insisting that Rita and his friend Mario, who had also dropped in a little while before, should join them in a champagne supper to celebrate her return. And to make it worse, during the course of the evening both Rita and Mario took her aside and begged her to stand by Daniel. He was really not as well off as he seemed—had been utterly miserable and distraught during her absence—never so bad in all their knowledge of him. To be sure they had done all they could to encourage him, given him a little money and the like, but he no longer seemed able to work and had become alarmingly gloomy. It also developed later, she said, that just before her coming Sarvasti had sold his overcoat and so had a pocketful of francs, hence the suggestion of a supper. But now Lucia gave all the money she had with her to Mario so that he would pay for the supper. And then they all persuaded Daniel to keep his money for the next party.

And decidedly, as she said, an enormous change did take place in him that evening. She could see as well as feel it. He was so much stronger and gayer than when she had arrived. Later, in his high, dark work-room when they were alone together he paced up and down, talking of the future, how they would live and work together and both succeed and never part !

And to carry this out, she said, the next day she fixed things up with Olga and borrowed some money. Also Daniel himself suddenly succeeded in renting another room in his house that had been vacant for a long time. Following that there were more parties, foursomes and twosomes, carefree suppers in the big open square looking down on Paris. At the end of a week, though, the situation having been saved, as she reasoned, she felt that she could go back to Biarritz for two more weeks and get her mother to come home for good. She was, as she now decided, and for once and all, going to stick by the serious side of her nature as well as by Daniello. For was he not a truly tremendous and interesting character—to her at least ? Besides, with him near her she could really concentrate on painting, which, so she told herself, was what she truly

wished. In this instance, as she said, Daniello proved most patient about her leaving because perhaps he now felt sure of her.

And so again it was the end of summer. Lucia went back to the Beaux Arts, but now only for a two-hour morning class. This left her all afternoon to work in Daniel's room. There, from odd studies taken at the Louvre, she painted. Life, as she now tried to tell herself, was only worth while when one concentrated on something and was not afraid of suffering. She had, as she now tried to tell herself, she said, been right in the first place there in the Huguenot school. And in order to confirm her feeling as to this she wrote a long letter to Sister Agatha, trying to describe to her her state of mind . . . and then tore it up. For, as she argued nervously, Agatha hadn't even seen her for over a year. And what would she think of or care about her present state of mind, since she, Lucia, could not explain all? Anyway, as she said of herself at the time, she was proud of herself for having written it all out, or nearly all.

But one afternoon just before Christmas she was sketching a statue in the Louvre and people came and stood around watching. This was always a nuisance, and more especially since that afternoon a man, a stranger, yet whose appearance was interesting to her, kept walking through the room. He had not stopped or stared, just walked slowly by. Finally, she said, the crowd having gone for a time, she looked up at him. He was tall and dark, but obviously not a Frenchman. His shoulders were very broad and his clothes had a rough English look. He looked at her and smiled, quickly and spontaneously, and then walked on. There is a type of man I know absolutely nothing about, thought Lucia; a nice, clean-cut kind, maybe an American. I wonder if I would like him. She watched him turn down the stairs.

Three days later while working in the same place, who should walk by but her Englishman. She looked up and caught his eye. He smiled just a little, and Lucia, faithless to her duty, as she admitted, smiled back. It seemed perfectly natural to do so. "Do you mind my saying hello, mademoiselle . . . *Français pas bon*," he added apologetically. "No, I get tired working," she answered, stretching her arms

and settling back in her chair. "You know," she said he began, and at once, "I might as well tell you I have been here every day since I first saw you here, hoping you would come back. And you even speak English! What luck!" His voice, according to her, was rich and very masculine, not ingratiating, but commanding. He was Canadian and in Paris on business for a bank. Was there any way, he asked, that he could present his credentials to her family? Could he call at her home? Would her family come to dinner and the theatre with him? Lucia answered all his questions good-humouredly, thinking: how little he realizes what a bad girl I am. She said her mother was an invalid and didn't go out much. Finally she found herself promising to have lunch with him next day.

But, as she said to me, and this rather enthusiastically for so idealistic a person, as I thought at the time, *he was absolutely different from all the other men she had known*—much more simple in a way, and yet harder to refuse, because in the beginning he expected so much less than most Europeans. He was so boyishly delighted when she said he could come to Versailles and call for her the following Saturday night. If I recall aright, she only reflected one evening about this step. And yet she said she asked herself—and this most painfully at the time—was she drifting back into a worthless life of pleasure again? Could she? No, of course not! Frank Stafford was only going to be in Paris another week—there was no serious question of any kind involved; just a few moments of fun and excitement, maybe, to make her more patient with Daniel's moods afterwards.

And Stafford impressed, of course, with the neat dignity of the house at Versailles and with her mother, to whom Lucia introduced him and who fortunately approved of Anglo-Saxons and chatted with him amiably while Lucia was prinking. It was the first time in two months, she said, that she had worn evening clothes, and besides dinner, the theatre and the most expensive night club in Paris, to say nothing of champagne, kept them in high spirits. Later Stafford announced it was the first romantic evening he had spent in Paris. On the way home in the taxi he kissed her, not sensually as much as enthusiastically, as she explained, albeit a little sheepishly.

After that came cards and letters from him from Budapest

and Rome. He had fallen in love with her, he said ; the first woman who had ever made him feel that way. He was not going to sail from Hamburg, after all, as he had planned, but instead was arranging to come back to Paris for two more weeks.

And by then, although Lucia, as she said, had determined to make Daniello and her work all her life, for at least another year, still when this message arrived, and later Sir Frank himself, she could not resist going out with him. Dinner, theatre, night clubs. And Sir Frank seeming more and more good-looking and good-humoured and this and that than ever. What would you ? And now he told her he was sure he could not live without her. More romantic still that he proposed to stay over until she would marry him and they could go back to Canada together. He was sure he could convince her as well as her mother, who would want to know that he was good enough for her and able to make her comfortable.

The honesty of his desires—or so she insisted—touched her, and when his arm was around her, strong and yet not demanding like his voice, she wanted him suddenly in a way she had never wanted any man before. Up to this time, as she saw it now, she had wanted life, excitement, some kind of mental as well as physical satisfaction. But now and thus suddenly and most unreasonably as she saw it at times, she wanted only this Frank Stafford and none other. She even amazed him, if not herself, by giving herself to him before he realized what he or she was doing, and that in the little entrance hall where she used to struggle with Carlos. Afterwards, as she said, he appeared to be terribly ashamed of himself as though he had allowed himself and her to fall into a great and even shameful error and so begged her to forgive him. “Of course, you will marry me now, darling,” he kept saying over and over. But to his astonishment, as she also said, she told him quite calmly that she had a lover and because of that and his views as well as hers, which would apparently clash with his, she, if not he, was destined to be unhappy all her life. But then, as she said, he was unwilling to listen to her that night or any time. She was not thinking right—seeing life right—she was too young, impetuous, inexperienced really. They would talk it over to-morrow in his room at the hotel.

But it was at this point in her curious tale that Lucia announced to me that then and there for the first time she discovered that she had really never had a lover before. For Frank was not as simple as he had seemed at first. By no means. He had had, as he admitted to her about this time, many affairs with women. In fact, only the week before in Budapest he had tried, with the aid of another girl, to make himself forget Lucia. But she being absolutely different from any other woman he had known, he could not, no, no. Let the past have been what it might, his or hers, he was going to marry her and they would forget everything that had happened to them in the past—for they could, *being different*. In connection with all this, though—or so she explained—there was a really fine directness and strength about him that caused her to half believe that all could be as he said. Besides, and despite Sarvasti, physical love was not necessarily as disappointing as she had concluded. On the contrary, it could leave you with a feeling that was almost spiritual. Yes, she would come to his hotel the next day, but not till after six. She had not seen Sarvasti for two days.

That next afternoon, as she confessed, she tried to avoid Daniel's kiss. More—and with a lack of conscience that scared her, as she said—she began to wonder if Daniello had *ever been* like Frank. "Of course," as she added to me, "judging from his stories . . . But I don't think anyone else could be like Frank."

And so began the struggle between youth and age, strength and weakness, which, as anyone might judge, could have but one ending.

Meanwhile, although neither Frank nor Daniel knew each other's names, Lucia told Frank there was a lover she could not give up, and Daniel began to suspect that there was another man in Lucia's life. Her physical indifference to him, as he now proclaimed, proved it. For as hard as she tried to conceal it, at this time she was, as he said, not only evasive but actively forbidding, and that he would not endure. More—and this either in spite of her protests or because of her encouragement—Frank had already made up his mind to stay in Paris and fight for her. He was, as she said, a most determined person, and she could not resist going to him two or three times a

week, although betimes she was also telling herself that it could not last, he would get tired of her and then she could go back to her serious relations with Daniel. More, as she insisted, although I doubt it, it was impossible not to be tempted by Frank's talk of marriage. Aside from the fact that life in Montreal, where he was manager of a branch bank, would be new and refreshing, what a relief it would be not to have to lie any more, or think up excuses for coming home late, or placate a nervous, over-affectionate mother on one hand and an unreasonable, impetuous lover on the other.

Toward the end of February, as she found, though, and this because while enthusing so over Frank she was still troubling over Sarvasti, the situation began to get unbearably complicated. Frank could not, or would not, keep his bank waiting any longer. Indeed, as he announced most conclusively and as though he could truly direct her, she was going to *marry* him, and at once. More, he had decided to, and finally did, take passage, a double cabin, for the sixteenth of March. Also, as he announced, she was coming with him. But there was still Daniello. And as if by some strange intuition Daniello now began to be morose and demanding. If Lucia really loved him, why couldn't she leave her mother and come to live with him? Would it cost her any more? And besides, couldn't she start working for money? Didn't everybody recognize her talent? And had she more to do than give a few teas and an exhibition to get started? Of course not! And of course if she thought marriage was important—she had said that her mother was troubling about her not getting married—why, they could even get married just to satisfy her mother. Or was she really trying to run away from him, since so often these days she was letting things interfere with their afternoons together? Didn't she really appreciate their relationship or was she, after all, just a superficial little English girl? This, as Lucia said to me in telling of it, was probably the worst Daniel could have said to her about anyone, let alone herself, English—a superficial little English girl. And when she prided herself on being Russian and mental. But Daniello had a violent Latin antipathy to anything Anglo-Saxon, as she knew. And Lucia, too, hated the English side of herself, because, as she said, she adored her Russian father

and it stung her to be called English. And this in spite of her mother and Frank and some English literary adorations, as she added—Swinburne, for instance, and Oscar Wilde and Dowson and Shelley.

As she once explained to me in telling all this, she thought much over the situation, till thinking could do no more good. Only, as she now decided, she did not love Daniel, that was certain. And she was drawn immensely to Frank. At the same time, as she still insisted, Sarvasti had a tremendous hold over her æsthetic as well as philosophic imagination and by some trick of his cosmos caused her to feel that he dignified her by his love and consideration as none other could, not even Frank! In other words, he, as she once said to me, fitted into her idea of herself as a person. On the other hand, although she did not love Frank, except maybe physically—and there was no denying that—still the life he now offered seemed exhilaratingly different—Canada, America, a new world. But and on the other hand again stood the fact that she scarcely had the heart to leave Daniel. He was so old, pathetic, helpless and needed her so very, very much—mentally, emotionally, artistically. And yet, as she also naïvely declared, she was too selfish to give up Frank. Had it been possible, I would have kept them both, she once reminiscently announced. “Varietist! Bigamist!” I promptly announced.

But now hearken! Two nights before Frank was to sail, she suddenly realized that she could not let him go without her. He had grown very bitter. He was sorry he had ever had an affair with her now that she would not marry him. After all, as he desperately and angrily announced, she had no sincere emotions. Pooh, in what way was she better than any woman of the streets? How? Never again, never did he want to see her, not even before he sailed. Yet early that morning, as the sun started coming into her bedroom, or so she said, she made up her mind. She could scarcely wait till nine o’clock to take a taxi to the work-room. All the way there she kept thinking: Daniello was right a year ago—cut quickly! It had to be done some time, and now while something was pulling her in the other direction was the time.

And yet, as she now found, and although she now told him the whole truth, Daniel was not nearly as violent as she had



expected. On the contrary, and that quite calmly, he now merely accused her of marrying for money, of having no soul or appreciation anyway. Why not go? It was best, certainly; certainly it was best. Besides, had he not expected this for the last few months? Well, he would be disappointed in her as with everything else in life, but what of it? Of course, it would change his whole life. He could not stay in Paris without her. But, oh, what a fool he to have counted on a deceitful child! But what should fools expect? Pah! And so that was over. For, as she said, as her mood stood at the time, there was nothing she could say or do. It was too late to protest that she was not marrying for money, and it would be too cruel to point out the fact that he had never really given her any kind of happiness. Besides, as she said, she still felt profoundly indebted to him for what he had given her of life and knowledge and emotion. And not only that, but this bitter, despairing attitude of his was much harder to answer than any unreasonable outburst could have been. So for a time, she said, she stood there, absolutely silent, then turned and walked out. Only in doing so, it was like running away from the sight of a suffering animal without doing anything. "Oh, how I hated myself," she said, "but then it was too late to go back."

And then, as a contrast, she decided to surprise her Frank and make him as happy as it was now possible to make him. Since it was too late to get married under the French law, she would simply let him find her on the boat and the captain could marry them. As she reasoned it, his joy at finding her would make him and her forget everything else. As she had the whole day in which to get ready, she now cashed as much money as she dared, leaving half with Henri wherewith to rent Daniel's rooms of him, and with the rest turned her face to the shops. Later, going to say good-bye to Olga, she was wildly encouraged and finally spent the night there, writing a letter to her mother in which she explained her sudden departure as affectionately and tactfully as possible; also one to Daniel trying to express what he had meant to her.

The next morning early, having done all this, and in order to avoid meeting Frank until the boat sailed, she went second class on the boat train. Yet, as she also said, all the way to

Cherbourg she was possessed by a strange feeling of unreality in regard to her immediate past and for contrast a tremendous sense of reality in regard to the more distant and earlier emotions which leaving Europe seemed to revive. Had she really, really left a strange genius named Daniello? Was there a man on this very train somewhere named Frank whom she was going to marry? It would have seemed more real to be starting for Geneva or for the overgrown estate of her father in Russia, with him still alive and there present.

## PART IV

On the boat, as Lucia said, she discovered all sorts of things about Frank Stafford. He had, of course, been tremendously surprised when he found her standing and smiling at him on the deck after the pilot left. But his unconcealed joy was now mingled with a most unexpected concern. "My darling, if you loved me so, why didn't you get your mother to come along and be with you till we could get married? Of course we can't get married here on the boat. It's really not legal except in emergency. It's a very irregular thing to do; we would have to spend the rest of our lives explaining how it happened to our friends in Canada and everywhere . . . I don't want my wife to have a thing like that hanging over her head."

"But I thought you loved me so much . . ." was what Lucia said she said.

"Of course, of course. It is because I do love you that I say this. I love you but, don't you see, darling, it's just because I do that I want our future to be perfect. Of course, I have forgiven your past; I will never think of it again. But from now on everything must be open and aboveboard."

And so this now new side of Frank's character which, as she said, startled her—and somewhat disagreeably. For now there showed in him an unusual and quite adamant concern for formality—a side which Lucia, as she said, had never realized before. While holding no grudge against her for all he had learned or knew, his one concern, as she said she nervously discovered, was for each and every severe tenet of conventionality. They must do just so from now on—do this, go here,

do that—please all those who must be conventionally pleased—and none other. And day by day as they sailed, as she said to me, the English people and stewards and meals seemed to make him more and more different. Although just as devoted and as sincerely in love, almost too idealistically so, as ever, still now formality seemed to have seized on him. Canada ! Montreal ! The So-and-Sos—Lady this and Lord that. And with her who almost despised convention. Yet although, as she now said, she felt that this was going to be difficult and that she would have to start all over again to learn, and more, to coincide with if possible, this new side of his nature, still he was just as attractive to her as ever. Only—and the boat not crowded either, he still proceeded to pick her a cabin on a different deck from his own and right next to the boat's trained nurse's, to whose official supervision he proceeded to entrust her. Worse, he was at pains, as she said, to give her the dignified position of "my fiancée, travelling under the care of a former nurse of her mother's"—a white lie paid for with a golden pound. Not only that, but from then on he was almost painfully careful not to be seen with her on deck too late at night. And never did he enter her cabin nor permit her to enter his, an attitude which, as she said, and in spite of her love, irritated her beyond belief. For why not ? Had they not already been all in all—each to the other ?

Yet all day long they were together. And constantly, and as she said too adorably, he talked of their future and what a wonderful woman he was going to make of her, the position she was to hold. Yet, as she also said, she had always fancied that she had position. But just the same, and to be as affectionate and agreeable as possible, she listened happily and told him in return what a wonderful change it was to be with him. At night, however, as she also said, she could not help speculating about him as a husband. Of course she was going to marry him, but hadn't she better tell him right now that she could never change very much ; that she didn't really consider herself just a naughty child who was going to reform, but rather what she was and had always been—socially well placed but free—no different—and that although she was quite willing to wait for him, and draw as near as she could to his ideals later, maybe, still she could not help but feel that they were wasting amazingly

beautiful nights on the ocean. But also she decided no, not yet. All too evidently it had been a shock for him to find her on the boat among some who might know him and her later, and anyhow and plainly she must give him time to get to know her just as she probably required time to understand him better in order that she should not hurt him. And so no union here or further words concerning it. Rather, compli-ance since, as she said, the one thing she hated most in life was hurting people. It was her weakness to wish to pretend to be what they wanted, even though she wasn't—that is, if she liked them at all. And here was one—her prospective husband—who now thrilled her every time he spoke. Why, of course she must use all her skill and experience to please him.

Another pound, say, and the trained nurse accompanied them to Montreal. And then, once there, Frank took Lucia to an aunt of his who had a pleasant small house half-way up Mount Royal. She was to stay there a respectable length of time, a month or six weeks, say, or until the wedding could be announced and arranged. And since at first sight everything in Montreal appealed to Lucia, she was glad to be there, even this way. The snow still lay in patches on the ground, even though the birches were starting to bud—just like Russia. The aunt was an agreeable, if vigorous, old maid, who went riding two hours every morning and took Lucia along, though she disapproved of her riding astride. By degrees, however—or according to Lucia—she quite won her over by her horsemanship; also by the way she could discuss literature at table. Since this aunt belonged to a literary club and wished to stand well in it, she also promptly put Lucia up for membership, and so peace reigned there. Desiring of all things that she make a fine impression, Frank was naturally delighted by all this and found in it a reason for putting off still further the wedding. “After all, sweet wife,” as she said he said to her, “the longer you live with my aunt and make friends with her set, the pleasanter it will be for us after we are married. People who will usually have nothing to do with an outsider are already beginning to accept you. And Montreal society is terribly conservative, let me tell you.”

“I’m not going to mind Montreal so long as you aren’t too conservative,” is what Lucia said she said, albeit a little weakly.

"But if I'm going to stay on with auntie I think I'll get a little studio where I can start working again, just for a few hours every day." This suggestion, as she explained to me, had the effect of a small hand grenade to be caught before it got too dangerous.

"Darling, darling! Studio! For Heaven's sake, please remember this isn't Paris!"

And from that time on, or so she said, she began to fear that there might be incurable differences here which were destined to lead to what?

Just the same, as she also explained, there were moments when emotion ran higher in their veins than custom or position demanded. And once he took her down to a little restaurant in the French quarter of the town where they had delicious wines and salads, after which she felt better—although these trips had to be repeated two or three times a week in order to make up for the more formal engagement dinners and bridge parties ever upon them. For in the French quarter, as she said, they could really talk, and over the wine a warm happiness seemed to take possession of them. Besides, only four more weeks, only three more weeks, and then they would have each other again. Lucia had decided upon an apartment in the French quarter, with one big room for a studio, but when it came to Frank—! All right about the studio as long as it was part of an up-town apartment, but the manager of a bank must live in the strictly English residential section, where were at least five apartment houses to choose from, each with a studio. And as for furniture, anything you like, darling! Let's have a double bed like the one in Paris. (Oh, so he hadn't forgotten after all! Oh, if it was only to-night . . . they must have another bottle of wine.)

"On the way home," said Lucia, "I made him forget himself, for a few moments anyhow, but before he left he was again apologizing for his behaviour!" And on this occasion, as she also explained, she was too tired or happy, or both, to choose her words carefully. "Oh, don't be such a fool!" was what she said she said or entreated, and that passionately.

The next evening, though, Frank wouldn't take her to the little French place, and in addition they had a long argument

over the expression she had used the night before. In fact, for the first time since Paris Lucia now spoke perfectly frankly and tried to explain her point of view, which, as she said, she saw no reason for changing. "For your sake I am willing to make concessions to your so-called Montreal society, but when we are alone, and at heart, I will always be the same. I am not ashamed of my past, and never will be very different from the girl you picked up at a public art gallery in Paris."

At that he winced mentally and in agony, she said, and even stormed. Well, then, it was not too late, she said she added. She could sail back at once !

But no, no ! His whole life from now on was to be dedicated to her and her happiness. The past was past and buried. She must, she must face this new life with him and in a new spirit. Could not this be ? From the very first he had fallen deeply in love with her, as he now reiterated, and now she must realize that a man wants the woman he loves to be sacred —(so that he alone can defile her, Lucia said she answered bitterly under her breath—but when he asked her what she said, she could not repeat it).

It all came to a climax, however, and two weeks before the date set for the wedding. The aunt had taken Lucia to a club meeting because there was to be a discussion of Russian literature. Frank had gone to attend a directors' meeting. As soon as the lecturer stepped up on the platform, Lucia was strangely disturbed. He was not handsome, but gaunt and cynical, not unlike the man she had met going to Dijon. And more, he spoke brilliantly, not very good English, but flaring just the same. "And when he pronounced Russian names," said Lucia, "I felt my heart miss a beat." Afterwards she was introduced to him and at once they started talking Russian. Of course no one else could understand. "How do you like this cold country, my compatriot !" he asked. "I do not mean the climate—our Russia is cold enough—but the men and women ? Do you think anyone understood what I said about love to-night ?"

Lucia said she could not help sympathizing with his point of view. They must talk—how about tea to-morrow, he asked . . . No, unfortunately, one had to be so careful in Montreal . . . But surely somewhere in the French quarter ?

. . . Yes, she did know a place . . . Very well then, to-morrow at four . . . It was fun to talk Russian !

It was not the Russian lecturer himself though who troubled Lucia. She was too much in love with Frank physically to be tempted seriously, but he simply showed her that here in Montreal she was a fish out of water. In all of the three months since she had left Paris, this was the first time she had felt perfectly in sympathy with anyone, and he was a foreigner. Either Frank would have to change sufficiently to make the rest of Montreal bearable, or they would have to go back and live in Paris.

The next evening she suggested this last measure to him, but he merely laughed at the idea. What nonsense ! Paris ! A woman could never be made to realize that a man's career was of some importance, poor sweet things. . . . And what about a woman's career ? . . . Why, of course, she could play at being an artist and have a studio, as long as it was part of the apartment, but she didn't need to be different from every other wife because she could paint. Then, quite unsuspecting his reaction, she told him about her tea with the Russian, just in trying to make him understand her point of view. For the first time, as she said, he completely lost control of his temper, and insulted her as violently as if she had confessed she had gone to an hotel with him.

Well then, said Lucia to me in connection with this, what was the use of dragging this thing out, like the affair with Daniello ? "It was, as I saw it then and clearly, just as hopeless, only in a different way. And it could only end in some kind of heart-break, not for me, but him. I knew now, or thought I did, that I did not love him enough. And so, more cogitation, misery really. It was bad enough now, but how much worse would it be afterwards, especially if there had to be a struggle or various struggles before the eyes of the whole world, in divorce courts !" Should she marry and stand things until her physical desire was satisfied, or leave now ?

"What I really decided—only after a time, as you may guess—was that I admired Frank too much to go into this marriage with him merely for that. And worse—once married—he with his previously unsuspected conservatism would take it much harder. And should I bring that on

him? Besides, as I reasoned,"—(I am quoting her exactly)—“there were other ways of handling that desire of mine, after all. To be sure, he was my first real experience. Yet there must be others.”

Following this, as she said, she tried once more to make him meet her on that ground where she was weakest, so that she would stay, could stay. But no, his new character here in Canada was too strong. He must obey custom, stick by convention. And so, as she then saw it, there was nothing to do but run away, for his sake as well as hers. She tried, as she said, to explain that to him in a letter, which took her the whole night before she sailed to write. But time proved that to have been ineffective.

Yet once gone—for she really fled—there was plenty of time on that boat to regret and plenty of time and opportunity also to make oneself forget in the way that, as Lucia said, she had already considered. However, she did neither, but was still proud of herself for having made the decision to leave. Just the same, once gone, as she said, she suffered too much to make any other possible; no man really interested her, not even the memory of Daniel. Yet all the time, walking the deck and watching the grey sea, she felt again the way she had felt almost ten years before when looking down into that courtyard after her father's death, she had heard the crash of glass. She had lost something. Love, not only precious in itself, but that would have made her life entirely different if she could have kept it.

As for her future, as she then and there decided, she said, she was not going to be sentimental over that. Most certainly she would not go back to Daniel. But neither would she wait another three years to be seduced again. Nor would she return to the school in Switzerland any more than she could go back to Russia. (Funny, that thought still came up in her mind.) Rather, as she decided, she would seriously take up her work again in a studio of her own, and, as an aside, experiment until she found a lover who could complete, as she expressed it, the frivolous side of her nature. Evidently it was too late for her to find love. Only now one thought would not down. Why couldn't she have loved Frank? Why? She had come so very near it.



Another thing that she decided at this time, as she said, was that she was going to be brutal with herself, the way she had been with others. Only the form of this brutality as I saw it, peculiar—a self-cure of her love for Stafford via self-satiation with others—in other words, Dowson and Cynara. Thus from Cherbourg she sent a telegram to Olga announcing her return and asking her to arrange a supper with two men at *her expense that same night*. And since Olga loved doing things like that and if the man Olga picked for her was at all suitable, she would start immediately the task of forgetting Frank.

As per her telegram Olga, as she said, met her at the station, and together they rode to an old hotel on the Left Bank. "I decided," said Lucia to me, "that I would wait until I could break the news of my return to my mother more gently than by just my sudden appearance. On the way Olga and I chattered excitedly about a new beau she had and a nice Belgian friend of his whom we were to meet that evening. I just had time to change my clothes, as they were coming for us. Alone in my room, I sank into a chair and looked around. The ceiling was cozily low. There was an enormous mirror over the mantel and two candles on it. Two french doors opened on to a little balcony. The double bed looked so French, with its yellow feather coverlet. Except for an occasional beloved hoot of motor horns on the boulevard, it was so quiet. Nice room, I thought. I hope he will be nice, too, that Belgian."

Well, as she assured me, he was nice, quite—and appreciated the artistic effect of the two candles reflected in the mirror, without any other lights.

After that Lucia started experimenting on a larger scale. She and Olga would compare notes and lovers, and Lucia's life adjusted itself remarkably easily. Her mother was delighted to see her and forgave her for running away. She was so glad to get her back again that, said Lucia, she made no objection to the studio idea, provided Lucia would spend week-ends at Versailles. Perhaps she was a bit disappointed not to see her safely married, but she could not be too severe now that Lucia was twenty-three and had a right to some money in her own name.

Still, it was not nearly as easy to forget Frank as she had hoped and imagined. Perhaps, after all, as she once said to me, there had been something more than physical attraction. One day she said she thought she saw him cross the Place Vendôme and nearly fainted for joy. Had he come for her? If only he could forgive her, she would be willing to be his mistress, anywhere, anywhere! She inquired at the main hotels; also refused to see a certain lover for a week. But soon afterwards she received a long, sad letter from him from Montreal, showing that he was still there and also that he could not forget her either. But no expression of any hope of reunion.

Lucia, in connection with all this and as she told me afterwards, was at this time almost morbidly interested in noticing how different men reacted to her—whether delightedly or otherwise—and this in the face of her rather successful affairs with Daniel and Frank. One reason she gave for this was that Daniel had apparently looked upon her freshness and youth and perhaps unsophistication as her greatest charms, whereas Frank, although plainly loving her and having the physical strength that he had, was perfectly willing on the ship and in Canada to wait and wait, and this for social reasons. Yet how could a true lover be so? So she brooded on this, on her return to Europe, although, as she said, giving much attention to one casual affair and another. For by now she had concluded that perhaps no one took her sufficiently seriously, not at least in the compound ways in which she desired to be taken.

And so no lasting affairs—the danger of loneliness (emotional or mental) even in the midst of all temporary sensuality. At the same time, as she said, she had no real inclination toward any lasting affair other than with Frank, who apparently was not sufficiently interested to keep on writing. Once during this time she went out again with Carlos, who had once sought her so avidly, but now, she complained, he contented himself with describing to her his latest amours, and this lowered her spirits not a little. Later there was another affair—but he, like Carlos, talked of other things, “though,” she admitted to me naïvely and yet heroically and truthfully, as it seemed to me, “I was quite ready to reward him for his long months of waiting, but he did not lead up to the issue.”

Bravo !

Curiosity and some embers of affection led her to find out that Daniel had really left Paris, as he threatened. He had gone to Berlin, but just where, nobody knew.

Only Frank stuck in her thoughts, and he did not care. For a time then, she grew more cynical, as she said. Some people might have called her hard. Yet her views and conclusions varied, almost each day and as with the wind. Finally—although she went here and there with one admirer and another who liked her for a little while, but obviously, as it seems to me, could scarcely have been moved to love by one who, Dowson-wise, was so infatuated by another—once, as she said, although this I always doubted, she contemplated suicide. There was the Seine, or a boat trip on which she could jump overboard at night. Lastly there was a drug—never a knife, or a gun, since physical injury to herself had always seemed repellent. Yet in the face of all this she still loafed and dreamed. On the whole, as she said of herself at this time, her mind was more philosophically pure than was her body. And yet she never encouraged any man to remain faithful to her, nor did she pretend to swear fidelity to any. Sometimes, as she said, weeks would slip by between lovers or avoiding new ones. Then, an odd bottle of wine, or a long night of thinking, would stir up the necessity for relaxation and she would indulge in what she might capture. Toward the last, however, she was desperate. And at last she decided that if she had been wise she might better have married Frank and accepted his social viewpoint, and that should he by any chance return she would do so. She had proved, as she thought, that variation without the attendant support of at least one agreeable emotional or mental companionship—and a *male* mental or emotional companionship at that—could never be satisfactory for her. And so she drifted and drifted.

I wish it were possible to record here that for once in a lifetime, and for the sake of this book, if for no other reason, a truly satisfactory *dénouement* was achieved. Would that I could so record. Alas, as truly as her Frank had appeared to care for her, as truly did he fail to return. To put it in another way, he did return once and because, no doubt, he cared intensely. But, finding her, as before, unable to

dissemble, and after a fashion insisting on restating her peculiar need as I have outlined it here, he departed. Not that they did not anguish at one and the same time. As she told me they did. But he was neither strong nor broad—possibly not fool enough, as some would see it, to see her as anything but selfish. And plainly she was neither sufficiently loving nor kind to submit to him. In consequence a really final separation, with him going one way and her another. And subsequent to that another racking period of misery for both, as I am sure.

But then *time*. Time the great healer—the great sea—the lapping waves of which erase by degrees all traces of what was—old loves, passions, hopes, even dreams! Aye, *Time*. I lift my glass to its power. But after that, other affairs—yet always without love, as she said—or, rather, without real, true love or that seeking and intense desire that at one time or another so vigorously motivates us all. Yet desire—and love as well as passion. And the vague, world-old dream that sometime, somewhere there would be someone who would love her and whom she could love enough not to wish to look at another. Yet, three years after all this had occurred and at the time I was talking to her—which was in London as it chanced—that one had not appeared. And as assuredly, as I swiftly saw for myself, I was not that one. We might be friends, and good friends. She could, as you have just seen, like me sufficiently to confide slowly and I trust accurately all that I have here set down, this really searching and to me rather sad story. But more than that, no. And because I was not the one.

And then one day she said to me—and before a winter fire in London to which she had removed: “Do you know, I do not know what is to become of me. I really don’t. Here I am still young, attractive, unfortunately maybe too sophisticated—God knows—sophisticated enough at least—and more or less at a loss what to do with my life. I have friends, relatives and love connections, of course. Not only that, but time has softened some of my aches. I have even schooled myself not to expect very much of anyone and this principally because I do not expect very much of myself, and because I have been dreaming of how much I might receive from the ideal one who might come but who, as I also know, is never

to appear. So here I drift and dream. Recently I returned to Paris, opened a studio, and am going to paint, of course, but I am not over there yet. And I have talent as an artist, as you know. Mostly I read poetry and books. And see plays and entertain and am entertained. And now and then someone appears. And I think, Oh, Allah be praised, he ! he ! But I soon learn as before that I am on the earth. And there is no such he. No doubt the ill is in me. I am sure it is. I want too much and expect to give too little. And one who could be deceived by me would not be the one. I need a strong compelling force whom I could love—before whose strength and temperament I could be humble—maybe. But he has never come and as I fear never will come. So I must one of these days return to Paris and go to work.

“In the meantime, since I have means and social connections and this and that, I can drift and dream—entertaining myself with a dream. But for the most part how bored and weary and lonesome I am. God, how bored.”

She lighted a cigarette, lifted a highball and beneath sagging lashes looked at me—all that she felt and said.

**G I F F**



## G I F F

### ( I N T R O D U C T I O N )

**I** AM sure that to many this study of a seemingly vague, emasculate and even half-demented soothsayer or interpreter of tea leaves, dreams, and coffee grounds will appear to be not worthy the space given it. If accepted at all, it will be because it passes muster as ironic or sardonic humour, a characterization of a ridiculous and impossible lunacy. Yet for reasons which follow I crave for it most serious attention. For in the face of all inductive science and the strong and yet to me narrow walls of all naturalistic philosophy—the wholly electrical structure of Life with its electrons and atoms—I hold that behind these seemingly foolish predictions which “came true” moves something which is far more solidly real, if less material or electrical, than that which appears here ; i.e. knowledge, direction, control. For to my personal knowledge, these predictions did come true, if over periods of time varying from one to five years.

More, at the time—and more definitely now when I think on them in connection with much other data of the same nature that before and since has passed under my observation—they did and do suggest something which all science, if not philosophy, may deride, yet for me remains a strong probability. And that is that beyond the material or electrical face of life—its remotest and most abstruse and to me quite mystical atoms or etherons or quantum—moves something which, if not less mystical, is still less divisible and quite possibly more real—an all-pervasive intention or plan, if not necessarily wisdom. Also that this reality may not only foreknow but foreweave, so that like the approaching web and pattern of a rolling loom, to one as broken or emasculate and sensitive as this woman we are talking about—(not one more solidly manufactured or sealed by the creative process)—the very process, or at least a portion of its finished, if not as yet enacted,



pattern, might so become dimly, and yet truly enough, visible. Clairvoyance? Possibly. A much mocked-at but probably not untrue and sensitive hint. And though like telepathy (one of the commonest facts of our ordinary mental existence, yet dismissed by science and all naturalism as chance or accident), this may pass as guess-work or the sly deductions or trickeries of money-seeking charlatans, still there is more than that to it; a strange and amazing presentation that from generation to generation and century to century appears to me at least to be knocking for admission, waiting for "scientific" or, better yet, sensory recognition of its reality and later its interpretation. Yet until one shall appear who in all sincerity and humility will pursue the endless stræ wherewith this great foreknowledge of reality foreshadows itself, we shall have "chance" and "accident" as the explanation and the future of life, its visibility and hence predictability to some, denied. None the less, here are the dim and mystical outlines of something that if not foreknowledge and foreweaving at least suggests the same; the craftsmanship and hence intelligence of an intelligence in a machine.

Her name was Honoria Gifford, but "Hon" or "Giff" she was called by the band of hoyden roisterers and seekers, almost entirely of the female persuasion, for whom over a period of years she told fortunes, as I chance to know. And such fortunes!

"You are second to no lady with this gentleman. You dress up swell and go out with him. I see you standing on an artistic bridge, a bridge of beauty, not duty. As the poet says:

'Love waits, and joy,  
The happiest arts the nymphs employ.'"

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"You dip into life with a large spoon.. It looks to me like you'd own a railroad in Mexico some day."

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"Your past is like a truck wagon compared to the automobile in which you will ride soon. Two hearts meet and understand each other. You walk in new shoes, and your dreams come true. You marry this man and go to Paris, where you are honourably entertained in aristocratic homes. This is a journey of culture, much above the

ordinary. You put on a dress of handsome, bluish-grey broadcloth and go to a fine theatre with an elegant broad stairway. Your guardian angel is swinging incense toward you. Your cup is running over with happiness. 'Surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.' "

" Here is a brainy man with money, the St. Elmo type, most élite in his manner, with a straight back and slightly corpulent. He is sitting in a chair of luxury, pulling on his gloves, when an angel rivets his mind on you. You stand before him, firm like an alpenstock, with your hands behind you, refusing something he offers. This appeals to him, because he knows another lady who seizes everything he offers."

" Here is the figure of a patriarch, like the leader of a nation. He is holding a candle above you, guiding you towards a long, narrow road which leads to a broad area of life for you."

" The goddess of fortune sweeps your old life clean, and then comes love."

" Here's a lantern, a big lantern in darkness. It looks as though it sprang up to show you how to use your personality."

" You are standing like the Queen of the Night now, but you'll soon be the Queen of the Morning and use both night and day to make your dreams come true."

" Ah, let's see. Here's a cross, not a cross to bear but a cross pointing to the Rock of Ages. This cross brings you something you want in a religious, moral way."

" What's this ? Oh, an owl. Can't you see it ? ' When a wise person is born, the owl shrieks with gladness.' This owl is in the tree of knowledge, and you stand under it, ferreting out something that brings you money."

" At the bottom of your cup is a pearl. Feathers float but pearls hang heavy, so don't be afraid you won't get it. And here is a little ship sailing out in sunny seas. — is rowing off alone now but he is thinking of you and will come back. Let's see ! What month were you born in ? November ? The topaz is your birthstone. You'll see many sides of life. Thursday is your lucky day. Florida and Mexico are your lucky countries."

"You have shed your last tears. Harvest days are coming. There are trees and flowers growing in places where trees and flowers never grew before. Your dreams come true. You look back, only to laugh at the past. You see the butterfly side of life soon. You eat chicken and drink out of a tall, thin glass. You will be living in your regal spirit then."

I have given here merely the Giffordian or Honorian outlines of some of the many predictions made by this fortune-teller-extraordinary to the rounded company I have described. But how shall I portray that rag-bag figure, that after-a-fashion (not entirely by any means) rag-bag intelligence? For mark you, as I have already said, I am one who stands convicted of a most unorthodox theory in regard to life, intelligence, and that accumulated store of wisdom or knowledge so-called whereby sociologically as well as organically (in the natural sense) nature, or rather the race, is assumed to progress onward and upward—to organize, build, beautify. And this is that a new truth is as likely to shine forth suddenly through a broken or partially so, or a weak and distraught temperament as through a wholly sound one. In short, that misunderstood or ignored data are frequently before one in this form. (I refer you to my introduction.) And that Honoria was such a vehicle I have never doubted. In fact, after years of meditation since her death, I stand convinced of it.

But to return to Giff. That bewrayed and semi-demented, also half-frightened, half-apologetic, and always retiring and self-effacing, look, which seemed to say: Let no one imagine for a moment that I wish to obtrude or offend. Indeed, the life and light that was in her, if life and light it was, was a wholly quaint and faint and *laura-jean-shian* thing, a smattering or perhaps, better yet, *compote* of hearsay culture as well as utility—culture that was no more than a flotsam of songs, poetry, proverb, parable, fable, tale or truth, which chanced to drift into that decayed and shallow harbour, her mind—plus gentility that was innate but coloured by spindrift and spume concerning how ladies and gentlemen in some fabulous land of gentility (England principally, I believe; the old South next) conducted themselves.

But the poetic citations and descriptions of dubious proceedings here and there on great occasions with which she

interlarded the more matter-of-fact data revealed by tea leaves and grains of coffee ! The amazing similes and half-grasped quotations, picked up from where ? I always suspected Laura Jean Libbey, Mrs. M. E. Braddon, Bertha M. Clay, and the author of "St. Elmo" (her favourite novel, by the way), to say nothing of the works of the author of "Hollow Gold," as her most outstanding sources. At times, however, she would spout Longfellow : "Be still, sad heart, and cease repining !" and some of the outpourings of Felicia Hemans. Antedating this may have been some home culture and means. I never really knew, although she always insisted there was. For the most part I took it that with no least consciousness of being dishonest, she had built up a romantic or at least dramatic and trying past for herself, quite like the ladies in her favourite books.

Yet plainly she was not a profiteer, nor of that shabby, grafting tribe that by promises of fortune to the unfortunate or the dubious, ekes out for itself a comfortable if limited life. On the contrary, she received all too little for her predictions. And if she was, as we say and as I know she must have been, "a little light in the upper story," she was nevertheless an industrious, religious and kindly woman, or old maid rather, who found it absolutely impossible to take advantage of anyone and who, entirely apart from the remarkably worded "fortunes" she was wont to pour forth to all and sundry for so little as a dime or a quarter or nothing, as the case might be, worked out a most unsatisfactory and limited life as dishwasher, waitress or chambermaid, the same almost always conditioned by drear and chilly and dusty hall bedrooms—rooms so cold and poorly lighted and poorly papered and furnished that I often wondered how anyone could endure them as an unchanging social or economic diet and still retain that buoyant optimism and exalted and controlling faith which, apart from the language flow above indicated, were among Giff's outstanding characteristics.

But preferably I would present her as she entered anywhere after her working hours or on Sundays or holidays and when she had been called by one or another of her various friends, or patrons as she chose to call them, to do a little "reading." The air of apologetic and yet conscious gentility and merit

with which she would then carry herself, albeit somehow belied by the ash-can hats, gloves, shoes, and flouncy clothes with which she was wont to bedeck herself ! But plainly—all of these—the oldest and poorest and most faded type of junk imaginable, picked out of old clothes shops or dug out of what musty closets by those who thought they had found something which Giff might wear ! Yet the gloves (always too large and wretchedly mended) removed with the air of one who skins the finest of kids from tapering fingers. St. Elmo himself at his most imposing moments could not have done better. And the worn and degraded grandeur—once, as I recall, a most miserable and quite astonishing feather boa made up of such feathers as might have adorned a hard-pressed chicken but tucked about her thin and wrinkled neck with a real air ; at another time an ancient and most mouldy rabbits' fur "ermine" scarf, which was highly regarded by Giff because, as she said if I remember aright, it was the fashion for ladies in England to wear ermine. (Giff, by the way, was born and reared in Canada.)

Yet that sweet and ingratiating light in the eyes of her ! And the genial and kindly and ladylike way in which betimes she would lay off these scrapings while enduring at the same time the ragging that sometimes greeted her from these rowdy sponsors and friends who always looked upon her as "great sport" and "a scream."

"Gee, Giff—you look swell. Look at Giff, will you ? Hallo, Giff. Nice boa you've got there ! Flossy ! Certainly is a nice ermine scarf. Six dollars, you say ? Well, it's worth all of that if it's worth a cent !" And then the sidewise eyings of one by another, the funny mouths pulled when "Giff" was not looking ; the head noddings, as if to say : Don't miss any of this ; it's good. (And it was ; from one angle, anyway. It certainly was.)

But that tall and yet only eighty-pound body, frail and semi-tubercular. And the sallow and wrinkled skin, never lovingly admired by any man, you may be sure, even in its bloom, yet still heightened by such five-and-ten-cent-store ointments and lotions as her slim purse would permit. None the less personally I found her remarkably interesting and not so truly "dippy" as her customers seemed to think. For she

could interest almost anyone by the peculiar flow of her thoughts, melodramatic and floreate at times though they might be. And at fortune-telling she was nothing less than remarkable—never doubt that. Mysterious and wonderful ! For, as I will show, she told things that in some cases came true to the day and hour ; and she told them by looking at tea leaves and coffee grounds, never by reading cards. Cards, in Giff's religious lexicon, were sinful. And Giff was religious if she was anything, yet not obstreperously or obviously but genuinely so. In a quiet and unobtrusive way she believed in God and His protection and guidance. I am sure that she thought that He took part in or was an integral part of every move she made. He placed the tea leaves ; arranged the coffee grounds. God got her breakfast for her often when she didn't know where it was coming from—the cash for it, I mean. God directed her to those who wanted fortunes told and who paid her such liberal sums as twenty-five and fifty cents, on occasions even as much as a dollar ! In short, God once got her out of an asylum in which she had been cast by conniving relatives who had managed to have her declared insane in order to strip her of the little patrimony that was rightly hers. Or so she said. And after that God had directed her to that great maelstrom, New York, where since she had managed to eke out a precarious living for lo, some fifteen or eighteen years, if my memory serves me correctly.

Personally I first met her one late December day of the Great War years. She was just entering the quarters of the group that had arranged the meeting, and I recognized her at once by earlier descriptions. Although to her I had been touted as a personage, one to whom it would pay her to be civil, I noticed that she maintained exactly the same demeanour which later I came to know as her natural one : that combination of piteous dependency with the air of one who is to the manor born. This woman is worth studying, I at once decided.

But as to my fortune. She began at once with an analysis of myself, or rather of my prospects in relation to my work, which then as always were a problem. According to her, via the leaves in my teacup, I was faced by a disappointment

in connection with a certain thing I had been doing and upon which I had been erecting certain comforting hopes. (That came true.) Then followed one of those precise predictions very common with her, as in time I learned, and which one could easily check up afterwards. On the seventeenth or eighteenth day of the following January at about two in the afternoon I was to receive a large sum of money, as much as (please don't laugh) fifty or even a hundred dollars, she couldn't be quite sure. The leaves were crowded. Perhaps it was even more—"four figures? It couldn't be." But before she had qualified it thusly—

I had exclaimed "My God. Don't stagger me like this ! Say it a dollar at a time, and slowly. I can't stand such large sums mentioned in this easy, off-hand way. You mustn't do such things."

"H-s-s-st !" came a voice behind me and when Giff was again rattling on, "You needn't take her too literally. To her fifty or a hundred dollars is a large sum. Ten cents looks as big as ten dollars does to most people. Her fifty or a hundred dollars in your case means more likely five hundred or a thousand. Just wait till the seventeenth and see." I calmed my excited nerves. The thought of the original sum had all but crushed me.

And then a little later, amid a perfect avalanche of poetic citations such as only Laura Jean or the divine author of "Wormwood" could have irradiated, she made a prediction that I was to think of some seven months later and under the exact conditions she was then depicting. "I see here in these leaves," she went on, "a table of some kind. I don't think it's a house table, or if it is it's a very rough one. It looks as though it were made of rough boards. And it's standing under some trees and you are sitting at it. You will make a trip somewhere and you will sit out-of-doors at a table. And I see someone standing beside you ; a young girl, I think. She is handing you something."

"Silence !" I pleaded, offensively and defensively. "Not another word ! You mustn't compromise a hard-working author in this fashion. My lot is rough enough. Now I will have any number of explanations to make, and they won't help me in the least."

And this was true, worse luck, for the lady who would take me to task forthwith and keep an eye on me during the entire summer following was at my elbow.

*Allons !* Came the seventeenth of January, and not a sign of any sum of money and not a prospect in so far as I could see in any direction. Whereupon morbidly I exclaimed that Giff is a liar ; I was to have had five hundred or a thousand, but where was it ? Came the eighteenth, however, and at eleven o'clock a telephone message. A certain English theatrical manager—one Charles Coburn, no less—was on the wire. He had been reading a published play of mine. Only recently he had leased a theatre in the very vicinity in which I was then residing. He was endeavouring to arrange for the production of a play which would attract attention. Was my play open ? It was. Would I be willing to part with an option on it for the ensuing months ? I would. For how much ? One thousand dollars, cash in hand to me paid. Silence. Then : when ? Forthwith ! Thank you, he would let me know later. Farewell, I thought, hanging up the receiver, that is the last of that.

Whereupon I went to lunch and returned at two-thirty. At three another telephone message. Was I busy ? No. Would I come to Mr. Coburn's office directly around the corner ? I would. But hold, he had to go out anyhow and would come over to see me. Would I wait a few minutes for him ? I would. In five minutes the doorbell. Enter Mr. Coburn ; in his hand, visible, a contract and a cheque. Would I read the contract ? I did. Was it agreeable ? It was. Would I come with him to the nearest notary ? I would. We walked together. I signed. The same was witnessed ; a duplicate, signed, was handed to me together with the cheque for one thousand dollars.

"Well, I'll be damned !" I said.

"What's the matter ?" inquired my prospective producer.

"Nothing much. You wouldn't understand, and I don't suppose you will believe it, but exactly this sum of money was predicted as coming to me at about this time by a fortune-teller some weeks ago."

My prospective producer and manager looked at me. "Very curious, isn't it ?" he replied, rather indifferently. He was



not interested in fortune-tellers at the moment and probably thought me an ass.

Nevertheless, I returned to my studio profoundly affected by the outcome of this thing and curiously speculative as to the scientific or philosophic or material or spiritual significance of forecasting in general. For if a thing that had not yet come definitely to form in the mind of anyone, its exact details, say, could be predicted weeks and, as I came later to see, months in advance, then what was this thing that we call life? Certainly not any haphazard process that each day and each hour and each fresh moment reformed itself, water or cloud wise, and *sans* rhyme or reason out of all sorts of chemicals and elements. Most certainly not! But rather the momentary and progressive display here before our passing gaze of some elsewhere woven pattern this long time in the making, and now draped over the revolving surface of this wheel, our earth. What else? How else a prediction of something that could not possibly otherwise be known? Subsequently and often since I have seriously offered this thought to those who are attempting to pry behind the arras to unriddle the very befuddling riddle, this living and breathing of ours, that here confronts us, but without results of any kind, thus far.

But now as to the second prediction. But no, we will wait as to that while I go a bit into Giff's history, about which at this time I became curious and took steps to gather as best I could either from Giff herself or from various friends whom I sent to consult her. At that time, as I learned, she lived on the fifth floor of an old, ramshackle tenement which stood in Seventh Avenue between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets. Her room was tiny and cold, heated throughout our damnable New York winters by an oil stove. Fifty years old she was at that time too, mind you, and without visible friends or relatives, and with only the income from waiting on table as her chief form of subsistence. But many a Midas of my acquaintance could not conjure Giff's look of unshakable trust nor yet her contented reliance though all the gold of all the mines were stacked at his doors. Time has begun to teach me that it does not come that way.

As I have said before, though, Giff was innately religious, and as a means of support in addition to waiting on table in a

restaurant—one of a chain at that time labelled “Codington,” I think—she played the organ in a neighbouring church with which soon after settling here she had allied herself. It was one of those none-too-successful independent missions called, if I remember correctly, “The Star of Hope” or “The Open Door.” Here she played the organ about as a Laura Jean Libbey-ish heroine would play it, in a small-town, by-ear, hymnal, home-sweet-home way. The worthy pastor, having a more distinguished artist to manipulate the keys on Saturday nights and Sundays, could only use Giff on Wednesdays and Fridays. Therefore on these nights she played, for the imposing sum of twenty-five cents per recital. Why he paid her twenty-five cents I have never been able to decide, unless it was because he felt that such regularity and faithfulness were worth something and twenty-five cents was the smallest amount above nothing that looked like something. Anent this same church phase, I also recall that Giff told fortunes at church festivals for ten, twenty-five or fifty cents, according to the nature of the crowd, yet turning all of the proceeds over to the church, thus strengthening her claim upon a fair share of “Pie in the sky, by and by !”

At some time or other also in her very humble career Giff had not only come by a very small and shabby-looking harp which æsthetically she admired almost extravagantly but had also learned to play the same, or rather to pick out certain tunes by ear. And once she told me that she was praying for a bigger one, because she would so love to sit before a full-size harp and play. It was so artistic and ladylike. But when I troubled to observe that she looked very well as it was, she added, “Oh, yes, but real ladies looked so beautiful and genteel before the really big ones”—music or no music, as I chose to think to myself. Well, in the course of time, following divers prayers and pinchings and scrapings on her part, as she confessed, and all at the expense of her not-too-strong stomach and lungs, God did grant her a medium-size harp, which, according to her, was just too lovely for words. For, as you see, God having relented as is His merciful way, at times, had finally directed her steps to the very place where she found it—an old auction shop, no less, where covered with dust it stood. But for eleven or fifteen dollars, as I understood, she

had been permitted to extract it, dust and regild it, and thus artistically equipped, to once more appear before the world. Her predilection for the harp, as I have often thought since, must have been dictated by that same bizarre craving for luxury and refinement which accounted for the feather boa and the ermine scarf. Where but from this innate and compelling desire, which was assuredly a part of her, could it have derived?—a left-over trace from the period or psychic mood that knew and produced the ladies of our *American Godey's Ladies Book* days.

Yet all of this, as I scarcely need hasten to assure you, had little or nothing to do (except, perchance, in a repressed and furtive and shamefaced way) with anything that related to sex or the recreative principle. Giff at fifty was still your true virgin, the soul of modesty, pure and without reproach. Knowing her as I did, I could swear that the least conversational drift toward a to her unmentionable fact of life would have brought a delicious blush to her wrinkled face. Not that she would have felt so much outraged as that her maidenly modesty would have called for a blush and a shrinking.

Once she troubled to tell me how it was that she had come to be a fortune-teller. It was this way. When she was still in Canada and before she ever came to the United States, she used to try to see things in her own teacup, because before that she had had her fortune told by others in this way and had wondered how they did it. And looking, she thought she saw various and divers things—men and women walking, birds on the wing (which others had told her were signs of good luck), and less favourable things such as a black horse, which meant sickness or death; a railroad track, which meant a journey by land; a boat on the waves or just a boat, which meant a journey by water, and so on. I cannot give you all the signs. You may study her predictions and see for yourself.

Just the same, and as we all know, she soon found that people like to have their fortunes told, whether one tells them the truth or not. In her case, after a time and after telling many fortunes for nothing or for fun, people began to tell her that what she told came true. Also in certain cases, some of those so favoured were so kind as to pay her a little something, a dime or a quarter. In this way, working for a living as she

was and making a very poor one at all times, the thought had gradually found a place in her mind that if she could really tell fortunes and do good honest work in that way, might she not use this as a source of livelihood ?

But fortune-telling, according to her ideas of conduct and religion, at the time was still sinful. Also as a source of livelihood, it was looked upon by many as low, certainly not lady-like. Hence, before she could think of following it, she had to take the matter in prayer to God. And God had told her, after hours spent upon her knees, that if she told only what was true and helpful as she saw or felt while grain-gazing, it would be all right. Hence, she told only what she actually saw or believed.

But to return to that earlier phase of her life which related to her incarceration in an asylum and which same appeared to haunt her, and from the suspicion attaching to which she was ever anxious to rid herself. I think this last had something to do with the relative complex which existed in her as in all of us, the blood desire to stand well before those who are of our own blood, or to amaze, astonish, or overawe those with whom we have been associated in childhood. Giff certainly had this complex. She seemed to me at least to be living and working in New York in order to enable herself at some time or other to prove to said relatives that she was not nearly so "loony" as originally they had dared to assume. I could never gather that there was any definite desire for revenge in her. On the contrary, she was too kindly and forgiving to long harbour bitter thoughts toward anyone, even toward those who might have worked her an irreparable injury. Just the same, one of her wishes, often expressed to those who knew her best, was to one day return to Canada "on the plush," as one of my unworthy roaming friends used to put it, and lower these same souls a peg or two with a vision of herself as a New York success. Item : one feather boa ; item : one ermine throw ; item : one to-the-manor-born harp ; item : several trunks laden with flouncy, fluffy, second-hand or discarded finery. If that wouldn't reduce the natives of one small town somewhere near Toronto, what would ?

But now as to the plot that led to her incarceration as insane. Once, according to her, her wretched relatives having become

greatly displeased with her because, as she said, she had a desire to shower her share of the family inheritance upon the poor and lowly (and certainly, in view of her general attitude, this seemed in pattern) they had agreed among themselves to have her declared insane, or better yet, merely to spirit her away to some private asylum and leave her there. And so, according to Giff, they did, seizing her at a time when she had fallen ill, and under the pretext that she was being removed to a hospital, incarcerating her in this private infirmary. And once in the clutches of the authorities there, she was forced to remain. Whether there was any truth in this story was never proved to my satisfaction, but her description of the circumstances attending all this as presented by her were not only minute but decidedly realistic and convincing.

Thus too weak to more than recline in the carriage in which she had been driven to this asylum, she had none the less noted, or so she said, imposing and well cared-for grounds about the institution. Also carriages in the roadways and various buildings and attendants. But once within, and for reasons known only to herself, she had concluded that the place was not a hospital and had screamed to be taken away. Too late. She was taken to a bare, little whitewashed room with a small barred window high above her head and reach. And presently in came a hardy female attendant, who without ceremony at once commanded her to be undressed by the time she returned, then went out and locked the door. Horrified at this command (and knowing Giff, you would believe this), she refused so to do. Whereupon the attendant returning and finding her still dressed, and wishing to impress upon her the necessity for obedience, tore her clothes off. Then, weeping and sick, as she insisted she was, she was pushed into a bath-tub—fairly toppled into it—where she was compelled to scrub herself with a coarse brush and wretched soap. Then given a rough towel she was ordered to dry herself and then furnished with a coarse slip which she was compelled to wear during her stay there. (One's solicitous relatives !)

During this period, which she estimated to be more than three years, she, as she always insisted, quite lost track of time. No books or papers of any kind were supplied, and all but the most helplessly insane were kept busy at menial tasks, scrubbing, -

dish-washing, waiting on table, cleaning the wards, and looking after the still more helpless inmates. There was, to be sure, a large and presentable mess hall into which three times a day all were marched, the men eating at one end and the women at the other. And the food, as she retold, though poor, was not vile, she could make no complaint as to it. But she firmly contended that she had never been insane, even for a moment, and that the knowledge of the great injustice done her had caused her great anguish. But she kept her faith in God and His love, and was eventually aided to escape by an attendant with whom she became friendly and who believed that she was being unfairly dealt with.

More, the observations made by her concerning the life of this place were not those of an insane but rather of a sane and quite intelligent person, as I thought. Thus, she was fond of telling how one evening at the supper table a large, fat woman lunatic took up a mustard pot and solemnly ate all the mustard, the tears streaming down her vacant face yet without sense enough to realize that the thing was not comfortable and not especially appetizing. Another woman entered the shower bath of her ward one day and in the absence of the attendant turned on the boiling water and all but cooked herself into eternity, without even realizing that the water was hot. There were stories of inmates who sat in rows and annoyed each other with unkind remarks until one or another would flare up in anger and start to leave or fight, whereupon an attendant would usually appear in time to prevent hostilities or a not permitted departure. Also there were monthly dances, supervised by numerous attendants, at which the sane and insane of both sexes danced together. Also there was a story of a red-haired Irish attendant, a woman, who was known among the lunatics as "the white murderess." It was whispered that, single-handed, she had choked to death now one and then another of those who were not sufficiently submissive. These were but a few of the tales that Giff told with great clarity and force—scarcely the observations of a hopeless lunatic, anyhow.

Yet during her time there she was apparently forgotten by her relatives, as well as all others. And when she managed to escape she was afraid to take any action against her family or even to permit her whereabouts to become known or to

stay in her own country, lest once more she be seized by them and returned to the asylum. It was for this reason that, penniless and friendless, she eventually found her way into the United States. In borrowed clothes, as she once told me, she slipped across the Canadian line into Detroit and there began her free life as a dish-washer. She had washed dishes in the asylum.

But, as I think it is important to note, she never intruded this portion of her life into her conversation unless seriously importuned so to do as by myself. Rather she was what might be called an incurable optimist, and despite all her ills, past and present, was engaged only in counting her numerous blessings and thanking the Giver of all Things for the same. Dish-washing, waiting on table, working in a laundry or as chambermaid remained for her the staples of her vocational life until quite the end. Fortune-telling, harp and organ playing were merely *divertissements* or dignifying social opportunities which brought her in contact with the grand and successful of other walks.

And in this connection some time after she came to New York it had dawned upon her that by combining these various resources she could go almost anywhere—to the sea-shore or mountains in summer and to the winter resorts in winter. For by the mere taking of a job as waitress or chambermaid in a summer hotel or camp she could assure herself of the necessary transportation. And once there, how easy to connect up this same with her skill as fortune-teller, harpist, speaker, etc., and thus add to her social connections as well as her income ! So, by degrees and via the mission enthusiasts and leaders in different places, and the help about the various hotels where she worked and for whom she told fortunes for nothing or for a dime or a quarter, she finally came to be introduced to the guests of some hotels, and in this fashion not only her income but her reputation grew. So much so that toward the last at least she was able to say, and with quite an air (of that you may be sure), that she thought she would go to the mountains this coming summer, or to Palm Beach or Ormonde or Miami about the first of December. And by degrees, and in her own way, and during a period of some three or four years before she died, she was able to take part in the

social life of Asbury Park, Belmar, Ocean Grove, Atlantic City, Narragansett, the Adirondacks, White Sulphur, Palm Beach, Asheville, Miami, and the like as fortune-teller-extraordinary to all who had any interest or hope in the future. And hearing betimes from one and another of those who knew her of these peregrinations of hers and chancing to find myself in either the heat or the snow of New York and unable to leave I quite envied her.

In the course of this last period of her life as it appeared, and as odd as it may seem to some, she became the owner of a little property, a lot, no less (ten dollars down and ten dollars a month) in the fair city of St. Petersburg, Florida, where eventually, I believe, she was planning to spend her declining years. At the same time, as she once explained to me, she was beginning to realize, at fifty-five or thereabouts, that after all and despite her skill and obvious success as a fortune-teller, as well as the favour and protection of the Lord, she was more or less alone in the world and would be more and more so unless by some process of thought she would contrive a welcome and living companionship in some form. Strangely enough, she had no least leaning toward cats, dogs, or pets of any kind. And always a confirmed and hopeless spinster, she had, long since, apparently, given over all hope of interesting a man, if ever she had even so much as entertained so reckless a thought. Therefore, her mind now turned to a new and, as she saw it, wholly certain source of comfort—an orphan child, no less and preferably a boy. But adoption, as she presently discovered, was a difficult business. For here in America one needed not only a good character but some means and a fixed abode before any of the agencies which control the interests of orphans would vouchsafe any such boon. In short, it was necessary to establish a home and a sure means of support. Therefore, the lot in St. Petersburg bought on the instalment plan and her dreams in connection with the same for its development and future use.

Only, as she now discovered, getting a lot paid for was in itself a long and tedious process. All in all, if I recall aright, it required some four hundred dollars to clear title to the lot she had selected. In addition to this, if ever she were to be permitted to adopt a child, she would be compelled to prove



that she was quite able to support one. But how? By fortune-telling? The mere thought of it convinced her that no child-placing agency would ever place a homeless child in the care of any fortune-teller! Hence obviously it was necessary to find a more stable means of existence. And thinking along this line an idea finally dawned on her. She would establish a rest or tea-house on this same lot on or near the beach, where the weary Florida tourist, ambling along the beach, could cool his or her heels and fevered brow while drinking tea and eating cake and having his or her fortune told by Giff herself. Only in connection with the child-placing agency and the hoped-for child, it was necessary that this fortune-telling feature of the tea-room should be kept dark—not that it was so wrong, as that our American political and social arbiters could not or would not understand her compact with God.

But unfortunately in connection with this tea-house idea, as well as the lot, there was a total of some eleven hundred dollars to achieve and no new or better resources in sight than those outlined. Yet, as I eventually saw for myself, she was not downhearted, but rather elated, by the great task, and went about telling how certain it was that the Lord would aid her, since never, as yet, had He failed her. (Do you mind if I rise and bow.) Therefore long before the lot was ever paid for, as I was told, the mail of various portable house manufactories of America east and west was rather heavily charged with missives from one Honoria Gifford requesting information as to the lowest price for a small portable mail order house or pavilion delivered at St. Petersburg, and capable of sustaining at least one large, bright awning such as one notes in Florida resorts; also various “high-toned” (the adjective is Giff’s) wicker chairs and tables. (Smile not, O grandiose reader! Remember the poor and lowly!) Next, if everything went well, she was to dress up lady-fashion as became so “high-toned” and delightful a place, and indulge in “psychologic readings.” (I gave her that phrase.) Also the idea of advertising the same and so attracting trade and fame. But as to the phrase “psychologic readings” she had some doubt. The term, it seemed, was a misnomer, for she still insisted that tea leaves and coffee grounds furnished her with her finest

and most accurate readings or mystic suggestions. And were they or were they not "psychologic"? (Reader, are they or are they not psychologic?)

More, in connection with the St. Petersburg tea-room, which was to pave the way toward that solidarity which would permit of the adoption of a child, a bank account. She must first save before she could proceed. And so an original deposit of two dollars, as I learned. Yet by working here and there and "reading," she was able to add to this by degrees. Only as I heard afterwards and from one source and another, her reserve supply of cash was rising but slowly; also that that same meant an economic pinching that finally affected her health, though I can honestly assure you that I never saw her when I thought she had any health or weighed more than eighty pounds, say.

More than that, between these summer and winter hegiræ of hers she was accustomed or temperamentally compelled to revisit New York, her one and greatest urban love—the city, as she always said, that had been most kind to her! And it was in connection with these visits that I most frequently saw her, since it was her spiritual as well as affectional duty at such times as she saw it to not only look up all her old-time friends and report progress and the various blessings vouchsafed her by God, but this she regularly did, myself being one of her beneficiaries, tell the fortunes of one and all who had previously known her. And so it was that I came to know so much of her as well as my future, worse luck.

But on one of these same New York visits—*en route* to Ormonde, I believe—she took a room for the nonce in that same wretched neighbourhood in which she had first starved, because, as she always said, she "knew everyone around there"—Mr. Switzer, the Door of Hope minister for one, and Mrs. Beasley, who ran the gloomy shack which she counted as her New York home. And it was while occupying this room that one night she overslept—never came to, or awoke, to be exact. The reason for this, as it appeared afterward, was that, being poor and seeking always the most inexpensive forms of existence, she had been furnished with an oil stove only—her favourite form of heat as she once said to me. And said oil stove provided by her landlady as well as the Generous

Giver of All Things, was a small and carbon-dioxidous affair of a none-too-discriminating disposition. (It could not or would not discriminate between the righteous and the unrighteous.) And being left burning one night by Honoria, in order that she might not suffer from too much cold, it had burned too low and so had come to emit sufficient fumes to overcome the small spark which Honoria called her life. Weep not. She rests well.

Hence the conclusion of this true, if curious, tale. No orphan, you see. No well. No weary and remunerative travellers at St. Petersburg seated under the palm trees and being "psychologized" and served with tea and ice cream. No Giff in summer finery and bliss and gratitude. Nothing, in short, unless death in a hall bedroom, her hall bedroom, and from the fumes of a dioxidous oil stove, be something. Oh well—we can't have everything, can we? But worse, a shabby little funeral in New York, attended by some four or five—the minister of the Door of Hope for one and Mrs. Beasley for another. The bank account, looked into afterward and eventually forwarded to those loving relatives in Canada who, as Giff had insisted, had incarcerated her as insane, totalled £278, almost enough to pay for the Florida lot.

But then, think how much more would have been required to make "come true" the tea-room and the well and the wicker furniture and the awning and the orphan!

P.S.—But I cannot close this history of Giff without a reference to Nan, a life-loving pagan and hoyden who for considerably over a period of five years fed her parched desires on Giff's erratic and seemingly half-lunatic mutterings. Nan, I am sorry to report, is not a part of this book. But she it was who compiled for me, after a shorthand transcription, at least one hundred solid typewritten pages of Giff's predictions, in hers and other cases, and from which record the quotations at the beginning of this study are taken and the last one of which refers to Nan herself, the girl who would one day "eat chicken and drink out of a tall, thin glass."

Nan was of that semi-practical and semi-mystical temperament which believes and yet does not believe. From various conversations with her, and when she was decidedly poor and

rather hopeless, I gathered that Nan had yielded to an abiding faith in some force which if directly appealed to via intensive thought, as in prayer, say, would act in one's behalf. It mattered not that the person so appealing was either good or evil. Nan certainly was neither markedly one nor the other, and in her was no thought, let alone acceptance, of any prescribed faith or creed. On the contrary, her meditations as well as her appeal, I am sure, were pagan, personal and direct. Yet because of her positive faith in the willingness and ability of a superior force, the nature of which she would not trouble to dwell on, to aid one, if it would, she was naturally interested by Giff, since Giff, via her soothsaying, must represent a related if not exactly identical point of view.

How often have I not seen Nan sitting or lying and thinking or meditating on this profound and all-pervasive power or force or creative energy, as she liked to think of it, which could, if it would, give one what one desired and, in some instances, in very material, unmoral and pagan ways—although said superior force has always been thought to be moral, I believe—almost unduly righteous, even. And betimes allowing Nan to work for as little as eighteen dollars or less a week and to live in a spare room and alcove containing little more than her books, her victrola, her typewriter, some cigarettes and kitchen utensils and her meagre little closet of clothes—when she knew or she insisted that she deserved so much more. Of course, there was also a centre or reception place for the men through whom and by turns came dinners, dances and week-end trips. Only as yet, not *the* man nor the position or luxury to which she aspired. Yet a kindly and even romantic, if wholly unmoral, attitude toward life on her part. Not too much grumbling or complaining. And always this faith in this supreme force which could, if it would, act in regard to one. (I commend this to all who are not as well placed as they would be.)

But even so, Nan had her periods of depression. And once, in a fit of supreme despond, she wrote to me that Giff was surely a joke. There was nothing to her predictions. Her life (Nan's) was obviously a failure. For, as you may guess, she was not growing any younger and she had not been one to conserve her youth. Indeed, I myself, observing her over a fairly long period of time, began to grow dubious.

But behold ! Listen ! I tell you nothing but what is true ! There was an absence from New York on my part of something less than three years. During that period I heard little from Nan save as above—darker and darker conceptions of her future, as well as of Giff's foreshadowing powers. In short, at the time—she had finally lost all faith in Giff as a fortune-teller. Nothing of all she had predicted over a period of years—"the thin, tall glass," etc.—had come true, and she was, as she wrote me, "off her " for ever. And yet. . . . But harken ! I return to the city, and for old sake's sake call Nan on the telephone. Yet now a change—something in her voice—a certain gaiety or ease or lilt no less. Plus a something else—caution I believe is the right word. For now she added—and never this before to me, would I mind meeting her out for lunch or dinner somewhere rather than trouble to come to her place ? For . . . but wait : . . . She would tell me when she saw me.

We met, and then a tale. Since her last and darkest word to me concerning Giff and her predictions and herself, there had been, well, a most interesting development—a flirtation, no less, and with a most interesting man, one somewhat older than herself but very well placed materially and devoted to her. True, she had not cared for him so much at first and did not now in some ways. He was too practical and perhaps unromantic, too thoughtful of stocks and bonds. But would I believe it, he was worth several millions ; was the sole owner of an enormous storage warehouse—ground, buildings, business, all. More, he had a large estate in New Hampshire. Also a yacht, 110 feet in length and beautifully appointed. In this he travelled a great deal, alone. His wife had died six years before, and since then he had been trying to divert his mind and take life a little easier. But now, now, as sure as anything, he was proposing marriage. And jealous ! If he should hear of this meeting !

"Then Giff was right after all," I said.

"Well, it certainly looks so."

"And when do you expect to marry ? Come now, no bluffs !"

"New Year's Day, I think."

"The new leaf ?"

"Well, yes. Besides, he has a superstition in regard to it. It seems that so many good things have begun for him then."

"So Giff was right after all. What?"

"Yes. She was."

And so on New Year's Day the marriage in question. And therewith a long acquaintanceship with poverty as well as a most pagan Bohemia ended once and for all. And in its place for Nan the yacht and the estate in New Hampshire; also a house in lower Madison Avenue, afterwards sold and a more central apartment in the Seventies taken. And Nan—she of the typewriter and victrola and kitchenette—in furs and jewels—(modest ones, I will admit), with a town car and social connections such as she had never dreamed of having when I first knew her. That "thin, tall glass." "You eat chicken."

P.P.S.—But I am forgetting the matter of the prediction concerning myself and the table in the woods. One summer morning about six months after said prediction, I was writing at a table made of fence rails and some old boards from a decayed barn, in the mountains. But under such a canopy of green leaves and with such a view as Robin Hood himself would have approved of. And I had come there after a quick and, as I thought, original decision, the result of an unexpected invitation. About noon then one day I looked up to see standing beside me at the table the daughter of mine host, holding some letters toward me. In a flash, and for the first time, came back the prediction made months before.

"Well," I said, really arrested, "now what do you know about that?"

"About what?" asked the girl laughingly.

So I told her.

But——

Oh, ye of little faith, judgment, judgment!



# ERNITA





## ERNITA

**I** KNOW Ernita. I know her honesty as well as I know her clear, unflinching, truth-seeking, love-seeking eyes, and I commend to your attention this outline of the circumstances which plunged her eventually into the very midst of one of the greatest social upheavals in the world's history.

She was born in Laredo, Texas, in 1895, her parents and grandparents having travelled from Illinois in a covered wagon to stake their claims. The hardships of this pioneer life caused her father finally to contract consumption, which resulted in his death and left her mother with four young children—Ernita, aged seven; Alice, three years older; and two boys, one a baby and the other twelve years old. The proceeds of the sale of their claim Mrs. Bartram invested in property in the growing town of Nacto, but possessing no business sense, advantage was often taken of her by sharp real estate dealers. But there they lived, moving from house to house as she tried to increase her income by reinvestment and taking in boarders. Still young and attractive, she could, no doubt, have found another husband, but the children stood in the way of that, and those years were a hard struggle.

One of their many moves, as Ernita once told me, stood out in her memory. A ten-room house in the poorer section of the city, near a big flour mill. Unfortunately, the "red light district" invaded their very street. Pretty ladies in kimonos lolled on the porch of the house next door in the evening, and there were sounds of music and many men visitors. Eventually, although Mrs. Bartram and the madam gossiped over the back fence and exchanged recipes and confidences, she had to sell the place at a loss, for she feared for her daughters and for the reputation of her boarding house. Ernita had only a faint idea of what it all meant, but her sister no doubt understood and was influenced by it.

At this time the elder brother began working as an errand boy in a wholesale hardware house (with which, at the time I knew her, he was still connected as travelling salesman), and Alice, as soon as she finished grammar school, took a commercial course and became a stenographer. Ernita, on the other hand, always most favoured, as she said, by her mother, because of her ambition to do something indefinitely wonderful, was permitted to go to high school. Of a brooding, sensitive nature, unhappy and pessimistic about the meaning of life, Mrs. Bartram always hoped that this daughter would either distinguish herself or marry rich. But before the girl's last year in high school, her health broke down from overstudy. Fortunately, by that time the family fortunes had improved to some extent. Alice had married a cashier in the National Cash Register Company, and the elder brother was doing fairly well. So Ernita was taken by her mother to California to recuperate. There was, at the same time, a bit of romance in this trip for Mrs. Bartram, for they were going to stay with the family of a former boarder of hers, a young sheet metal worker who had been in love with her for a long time and had returned to work in his home town in California, somewhere near San Francisco.

This trip opened up a new world to both Ernita and her mother. For so related were they in temperament, she said, that they were like two children in their delight. Neither had ever seen a mountain, or the sea. Up to her eighteenth year, Ernita's little world, so she said, had been Texas and such things as could be captured from books and dreams. And now, in this little California town, not so very far from San Francisco, sweethearts made their appearance for the first time. Before that, of course, there had been boys who had made advances, but sex as a definite physical contact, and as she was very careful to explain in regard to her early life, had no lure for her. In fact, as she said, it seemed wicked, and even shameful. Visions of intimacy scarcely ever came to her, or if they did, in so dreamy a way that they really did not stir her. Now a fat German grocery delivery boy hung around, keeping the family supplied with mushrooms which he gathered on the hills or bringing Ernita lovely wild flowers. And later he even wanted to marry her. But a move to another part of the town finally

disposed of him. Next, the son of a neighbour called regularly, taking her buggy riding and to San Francisco to the theatre. His mother would have liked them to marry, but they were both too shy to get anywhere.

Mrs. Bartram, in the meantime, had broken with the metal worker—who really constituted one of the reasons for her coming west—and he now, as Ernita said, proceeded to transfer his devotion to her. However, he was in no way attractive to her, being weatherworn and set in his ways. Also, long before this she had sensed his relationship with her mother and hated him for that. According to her, as she saw it then, there was something unbelievably disgusting about it all, and she could not endure it or him because of it. So now, in consequence of both women repulsing him, he left. Yet without his support, as she afterwards explained, the life struggle for the two of them would have been and was harder, for he had always contributed to the larder of the family, although she had scarcely sensed it at the time. Worse, Ernita wanted very much to go to a university, and that was now impossible. And more than worse, the following summer, after Ernita finished high school, she and her mother were compelled to work in a cannery—the only thing they could get to do at the time. But, as she resignedly explained, they were quite happy just to be in such a beautiful country, though they lived in a tent and worked very hard for pay which was little more than enough to buy their food.

That fall, though, the cannery work ended, and once more they were faced with the necessity of finding employment. Ernita, so she said, tried a course of training in a telephone school in San José, where girls were paid while learning, but for her it was dull work and nerve-racking, for her mind, as she always said, was on something not so practical—castles in the air, really. So when at the end of the course she was instructed to report for duty at a central station at midnight, she was suddenly seized with horror at the prospect, packed her belongings, gave up the little room in which she was living alone, and took the car back to the little town of Temple and her mother. Mrs. Bartram, alas, back at her old job of running a boarding house—the only fairly profitable thing she knew—could do nothing for her. The house was an old one

on the outskirts of town and, as Ernita said, depressing to her. The mere prospect of residing in it for a day, let alone for so much as a length of time, seemed to darken her entire future. So to escape—after any fashion, really—she started going to night school and studied stenography, typing and book-keeping.

Out of that, after months, came a job at eight dollars a week as general office drudge for a real estate firm—Wichet, McGillig & Tobey. A queer trio of rascals, according to Ernita. Wichet, large, indolent and old-fashioned; McGillig, small, vain, snappy, up-to-date; and Tobey, a shrewd, resourceful and conscienceless little Irishman, who was determined to succeed at the world's expense. It was McGillig who used to take her by the arm and tell her that there was everything in this game if only she would take an interest in it and, incidentally, him. And Wichet and Tobey also by degrees drew near with the same murmured advice. But they were not for her. In fact there was no real happiness here for Ernita, for she saw, or thought she saw, her dreams of something better in life fading into humdrum and distasteful labour. Worse, she was lonely, not having found anyone to whom she could respond with any degree of warmth, and at the same time haunted by exaggerated notions of how happy other people were, especially girls, and how little she had to do with. Clothes, for instance, she was sure added so much to one's charm—brought out so many things—whereas she, because of her poor world, her home, this, that, could do nothing. Yet was she not as attractive as others? She thought so, at times, she said. At other times not. Poor clothes, her humble home life, so many defeats in the past. "Really," she once said to me, "I am sure I had no very clear sense of what I was or might be. Besides, I brooded over my mother's life."

"God, how I suffered when her spirits were low or her face truly sad!" confided Ernita to me one day. "I cannot tell you! And it was these things, I am sure, that first set me to speculating upon the why of things. The great fortunes of some. Their houses and possessions. How did they come to have them? And why? How were they so different from my mother and myself? You say I was bitter because of my own defects, and that such bitterness is not entirely justifiable, too self-centred. And yet, how was I to straighten

myself around to a more optimistic point of view when I was as I was? I could laugh and smile, and I noted when I did so that various types of men whom, in spite of our poverty, I considered beneath me, were drawn to me. To avoid their attentions I had at last to affect an even greater reserve and primness than was really characteristic of me. Mostly, if I were to try to define myself at that time, I would say that I was secretly depressed or sad, but smiling and maybe a little pretentious in regard to a courage which I did not really feel."

Another thing that depressed her at this time was the fact that the real estate firm with which she was connected was not honest—quite flagrantly, if not obviously, dishonest—although, as she personally explained to me, she only dimly sensed that all of their dealings were not as they should be. One of them concerned a new city hall for Temple—a grand bit of graft for all the politicians and real estate operators of the region. Ernita explained it as follows :

"All of the real estate agents appeared to be speculating on a possible site. McGillig and Tobey were in with a local gang of politicians who were boosting some marsh land lying between Temple and Point Argos as unquestionably the site of this new building. And to convince a doubting public they finally began the erection of a brick building out on the desolate mud flats which were the backwash of Argos Bay. On this they placed a big sign reading—'New City Hall.' Naturally, there was a rush of the uninformed to buy the land while it was cheap. I even suggested to my mother," said Ernita, "that we should take a lot because I, too, thought it was the future site, but we never did. Land sold for as high as a thousand to three thousand dollars a lot. Japs, Chinese, and Hindus especially were attracted, but since in California this would have a bad effect on other land sales, the firm benevolently bought the lots for these aliens in its own name and then these people came in regularly and made their payments. Before most of them had finished, however, the swindle was exposed, and they lost all they had invested. Because of the scandal that followed, the firm decided to split. McGillig, the most daring and engaging of the lot, wanted me to go with him, and offered me forty dollars a month and a connection with him. Tobey also wanted me to go with him,

but I spurned both offers, merely staying long enough to close the books for them. And it was on the basis of my figures they finally dissolved partnership."

But, at this time also—while she was working for the real estate firm—the librarian of the town library, which she was in the habit of visiting several evenings a week, being taken by her looks, as she said—suggested that she prepare herself to be his assistant. She described him to me as a tall, thin, dark, serious man, highly respected in the community, who two years before had lost his wife, and probably at first saw in Ernita a suitable successor. But his cheerful courtesy was interpreted by her as mere friendly interest and not connected in any way with love or sex. And he also, after a time, must have sensed that she was far from understanding his import as a man, his emotional or sensual needs, for he soon ceased his efforts to impress himself upon her in that way and turned his attention to persuading her to study for the library position—perhaps in the hope of bringing about by propinquity the result he desired. Yet that, too, eventually came to nothing.

Yet this, as she saw it then, was a great step up for Ernita. To be a librarian! Or even an assistant librarian! This charming building, with its marble walls—(one of those small gift libraries that dot America)—seemed to her at the time, as she said, to be identified with some of those grander things to which she aspired. So without informing her employers for whom she was still working and of whose ways she was beginning to be suspicious, she began an evening course in library methods, and after a year was ready to take on library work. And it so happened that just at the time that the sins of her employers were beginning to overtake them; their crooked deals to be noised about, Ernita found herself in this position to leave them. Also, as she said, she felt with the library work would come a life nearer her dreams.

Up to this time, as she explained to me, she had had no affairs with boys beyond those mentioned, unless going to a dance, a party, or a movie, with one or another and being very much disgusted at their awkward attempts to kiss her, may be construed as affairs. Yet her mother was still taking in boarders, and now one of these—a mechanic in a Standard Oil plant, where her youngest brother was also working—

began paying attention to Ernita. He was much older than she was, but good-looking, as she said, and well-mannered, and because of these qualifications, she responded to some extent, to the point at least of accepting for a time a diamond ring from him. Her mother, as she added, while retaining much higher notions of what Ernita's marriage fate should be, still with her characteristic despair, made no great protest against her seeming choice, was willing indeed that she should marry this man—a mood or weakness in her which Ernita afterwards half resented.

“I think she must have felt that both she and I were too poorly placed in the world to expect much,” commented Ernita regarding this. “Life, as she probably argued, had caught me as it had caught her before me.”

Yet the engagement did not last long. An instinct *for better things*, as Ernita put it, or just plain common sense, saved her. So finally she told her suitor that she could not really care for him, whereupon he became very angry and demanded the return of his ring. And this, she said, she gladly gave back to him.

But co-existent with this was still the sheet metal worker who had once lived with her mother and, despite his dismissal, continued to hang miserably about in the background, hoping, as Ernita thought, that she might become despairing enough to accept his aid. In this connection she related a to me illuminating incident. One evening she and the “fiancé” whom subsequently she dismissed were sitting in her mother's little boarding-house parlour, having just returned from a movie. After a while her “fiancé” began kissing her, and though liking him so little she remained passive. It seemed to her, as she said, that she should have a beau and eventually—and that fairly soon—should marry someone. But then becoming bolder he put his hand under her skirt. She confessed she was fascinated while at the same time disgusted. But just at this moment there was a loud banging on the front door. Guiltily she ran to open it, and there stood her despairing admirer, the sheet metal worker. He had been spying and was white with rage. “Where is your mother?” he demanded. When told that she had gone to bed, he rushed upstairs and told her that he had looked in the window and



had seen what he had. Her mother called Ernita upstairs, but, always ashamed to talk about sex, questioned her only feebly, and when assured by her daughter that it was all a lie, chose to believe her, and so the metal worker departed defeated.

But through this same man and regardless of his dislike of her, as Ernita explained, eventually came a contact which was to affect her whole life. Although of a most disagreeable temperament, her metal worker—still he was extremely intelligent, a free and interesting thinker, and had heretofore exerted not a little influence on the opinions of both Ernita and her mother. He was a socialist and a radical after a fashion, although still interested in religion or at least in such personalities of the local and national religious world as seemed to reflect some of his own mental unrest; and on Sundays he was accustomed to go to any hall or independent church in San José or San Francisco where a seemingly liberated divine was preaching a broader faith than could be found in the ordinary or orthodox churches. And it was through him finally that there came to Temple to open a small church or mission a young divinity student from the Unitarian School at Berkeley. Long before this though, in Texas, as I should have explained, Ernita and her mother had broken away from the orthodox church and joined the Unitarians, who at that time were looked upon as radicals, religiously speaking.

So when this same metal worker solicited their support for a Unitarian Church in Temple, they signed their names. More, Ernita was given a Sunday School class where in connection with her work she soon after met the divinity student.

"He took to me at once," said Ernita, "and maybe—I have sometimes thought so—I was the cause of his finally deciding to come. He was slender and delicate-looking, with very dark skin and brown eyes, and wearing eye-glasses. At that time he seemed to me at least a most romantic figure. He was so superior, I thought, especially to the world with which I was familiar."

Interestingly enough, as Ernita explained, her mother never liked him. This may have been because she sensed that her daughter might leave her to go with him. Or possibly it was because the World War having begun and both women being violently opposed to it from the socialist point of view, the

divinity student was not. Or maybe it was because he was too religious or socially righteous. Bumptious he was, as Ernita described him, with the most standardized, world-saving views imaginable. It was a righteous war. Germany was all wrong—a beast of evil—a Hun horde marching out of hell upon a pure and innocent world—whereas England and the allies were snow-white lambs, fighting, and without any evil deeds on their side, to save the world for all that was worth while—not themselves, its shining mentors, by any chance. But Ernita and her mother, alas, had been reading current political and social science and were fairly convinced that it was all a gross and brutal contest between capitalistic powers seeking purely material advantages. England, France, and Russia were no better than Germany, if as good, according to them. And many were the arguments between Ernita and her mother and this young divinity student, who while they were almost bursting with indignation appeared to be enjoying himself hugely and, worse, condescendingly.

Although never agreeing on anything, as she said, yet here was the first man to whom she felt really chemically attracted and whom she was meeting on, as she saw it then, an even intellectual basis. Also, as she told me, he seemed an opportunity not to be scorned. For who was she? And behold him! (An inferiority complex, you see.) Besides, she was already twenty-one years old; her brother was beginning to tease her about being an old maid. So she passed over their intellectual differences and saw only the emotional harmony. And because of that, and because she did not want to give up her work—since her mother was now partly dependent on her—(although she had induced her also to take a library course so that eventually she might earn a living salary)—they entered on one of those long engagements which usually prove fatal. Delay is the dark room in which negatives are usually developed.

“Yet for me this was not difficult,” confided Ernita, “since at that time I had no sex emotions to speak of. But with Leonard it was different. He was passionate, and worse because of repression somewhere was actually starved sexually, having had no sex experiences of any kind. It was sin, you see. Yet nature being what it was—a matter of primordial sinfulness which one concealed, he did the best he could.

Only ours being a conventional and therefore moral as well as legal courtship, he felt freer to operate than might otherwise have been the case. In consequence, as I observed, and rather painfully (I being what I was at the time) his eagerness and haste seemed almost unnatural. For, as you must know, I was terribly shamed and disgusted from time to time by the several evidences of his to me almost animal excitation, and in consequence I would upbraid him until he would apologize in miserable humility."

Finally, finding her unwilling to marry him at the time or to satisfy him in any way, her lover hit upon a shrewd and most unministerial scheme to overcome her moral scruples. Since he could not afford marriage at the time, as he thought, they were to elope and keep the marriage a secret. He had a friend—a wild, romantic young Irishman named Molloy—with whom he went about a good deal, and between Molloy and himself was concocted a plan. Or, mayhap, it was the devilish Molloy alone. At any rate, Molloy was to take a trip to Santa Cruz and there, because of his influence with certain local newspaper men, arrange for silence in regard to the marriage ceremony, which was to be performed once the pair arrived. And so, according to Ernita, and almost before she realized what was happening, she was standing in the study of an Episcopalian minister at Santa Cruz and being married. When it was over she cried bitterly. Perhaps, subconsciously, as she said, some chemic intelligence within herself realized that it was all a mistake. At any rate a difficult relationship, painful to her because even then she had not got over the idea that there was something shameful about sex relations in general, doubly shameful when the relationship was secret, now began. To me, as she related all this, she insisted that she had no sensual desire at the time but submitted to her husband's passionate demands merely that he should not be unhappy. Indeed, to this wretched year of secret marriage she attributed a still greater development of her abnormal dislike of sex—always great and not until several years later, and under very different conditions, completely overcome.

At the same time, as America was being drawn further and further into the world conflict, the differences between these two as to the war became more and more serious—so much

so as to result in a real mental split, which caused her to question Leonard's mental ability or force. And that was a dangerous, if not just then a fatal thing, since like most women, if she could not look up to and admire mentally the man she had married, she could no longer endure him. Only, as she now saw it, she was married now and what had been done could not well be undone.

Leonard's school term finished, he went down to his home near Santa Barbara for the summer. He was, as she said, an only son and devoted to his widowed mother—a mother's pet. Ernita, as he planned and implored, was to follow and they were to be re-, or rather publicly, married. It was impossible, as she saw it now, to keep the marriage a secret any longer. Besides, her mother was now working in the library and so, economically at least, independent of her. Also the library staff, knowing much of Ernita and Leonard and their courting, was beginning to wonder concerning the long engagement. Also they had given her "showers" until everyone was tired of the subject.

By then it was 1917 and America had entered the war. More, Ernita's feeling against it had reached such a level that she and Leonard were arguing by post. Not only that, but finally, and to her extreme disgust, he wrote that he was going to enlist—to help save the world for democracy. At once she wrote back that she wouldn't be a war bride; that she wouldn't go through with the marriage. He could choose between her and democracy—making the world safe for it or for her. Then telegrams. Was she mad? Did she really love him, or did she not? Did she really understand what she was doing? How could she take such a stand in the face of her country's great need? Had she no love of country—no patriotism? At any rate, would she not come and talk it over with him? In addition, his mother wrote that already the wedding guests were invited—Leonard's life would be ruined if she did not marry him. If he went to war she would take care of Ernita.

So after quite a struggle, Ernita finally decided that since they were really married anyhow, she might as well see it through publicly. So one day she suddenly packed her trunk and departed for Santa Barbara, where they went through

another ceremony, this time at Leonard's uncle's house. An imposing wedding, as Ernita described it. The uncle happened to be a State official, and in addition to inviting several brother officials took the American flag down from one of the city buildings and stretched it across the veranda. The customary official private use of public property, as it were. Afterward they went to a cottage on the shore belonging to Leonard's mother, she having gone on before and arranged everything in order, in addition to installing many new and pleasing things.

"She was so thoughtful," said Ernita. "I can still see the note she left on the kitchen table. 'Dear children:—it read—' You'll find eggs and butter in the ice-box, coffee and sugar in the cupboard. Be happy and DON'T ARGUE ABOUT THE WAR!'"

But the war was still a symbol of a real mental difference between them. Leonard was wrong and she was right, as she saw it. She was rabid on the subject.

"Indeed, long before Communism flashed into being in Russia," she told me, "I felt there should be some change somewhere—a new social order in which war would be obviated by social justice—some world union of the workers or the oppressed. Or why should not the suffering millions just quit and drive the wretched, strutting, little 'leaders' of the world into the trenches and let them do the dying? Even before the war I had been troubled by the great extremes in American society, and this had finally set me over against the ruling classes. And now the war seemed to me to be proving how weak and meaningless was the individual, how used by forces and elements over which he had no control, but which, instead, exercised the most malign power over him. Unquestionably I was much taken with the notion that man was free, or that he ought to be—a notion which I have since had to resign. Also that America could, and should, do a great deal to keep unsullied the freedom and honour to which originally, as I assumed, it had been dedicated. Naturally I blamed American bourgeois society for our part in the war, and I was yearning for some scheme or method by which I could register my deep opposition. But since I was only one, and in a region and state and nation that appeared to be thinking directly opposite to me, and all my husband's way,

I quite despaired of any result for myself. Why, therefore, argue with him? Where could I get by it? Besides, just then I was very busy acknowledging wedding presents and didn't have much time for arguing."

She soon saw, however, as she said, that her husband was quite lost without these intellectual battles. They, as she now fancied (and with no compliment to him involved), had given him a better opinion of himself than otherwise he might have entertained. And that was not helpful to love. At any rate, as soon as she ceased to argue, he began to waver, and presently he was asking her what she thought concerning this or that point in connection with the war. She answered directly enough, but without arguing, and not long after that he announced that he was going to look into things once he got back to college—things, incidentally, which she had been reading and arguing for for years.

And true enough, so he did. And so thoroughly that soon he became as violently opposed to the war as was Ernita—but not thereby raising himself in her estimation. For to her, as she said, it all seemed too sudden—a swift and violent conversion. She could not quite be sure that it was a reasoned and sound conclusion, or something in connection with herself—sex or a psychic supervision on her part—might not that have a great deal to do with it? However that was, later at Berkeley, to which they removed, both began going about with one radical person and another until soon they were joined up, mentally at least, as she said, with those who saw nothing but wrong in the war and its causes. First it was with 'The Peoples Council for Democracy and Peace—an organization very much watched and hounded at the time by "the hundred per-centers" who were all for the war as it was—and after that with the Socialist Party—a still more evil thing, as those around them saw it.

"For what can be worse in America than a radical?" questioned Ernita. "And how rapidly we fell in local respect! Indeed, in a political and social way, we were now entering upon the stormiest days of our lives—a period which involved ostracism and social contempt. But do you think I cared? Rather I was glad and proud of it, defiant and unterrified. It seemed to me just then and particularly in so far as the

present social orders on earth this side of Russia go, as though I were doing a clean and beautiful thing, and I still think so."

Just the same, her mother was soon discharged from her position in the library because of alleged anti-war sentiments. Leonard, called to Chattanooga as trial minister of a Unitarian Church there, was promptly kicked out (in one month) because he held to his new socialistic faith and refused to make "an active pro-war campaign in order to build up the church." Followed notice to both to leave Berkeley—this from the Mobilized Women, a patriotic organization of the region. At the same time Leonard was denounced as a renegade from his religious views; Ernita as a crazy young radical. Their apartment and visitors became suspect and watched, and they themselves stood in continual danger of arrest. Ernita's mother, frightened by all this, proceeded to buy an acre in a poultry colony south of San Francisco, and to this mother, Ernita and husband removed with the intention of making a living that way. They called it "The Retreat," because it was not only a refuge for them, but also for other radicals just out of jail or threatened with jail. And there they set about raising chickens, although Leonard, as Ernita said, was really not fitted for any kind of hard physical work. And so poorly did they do that finally Ernita's brother had to come down and take charge while Leonard got a job with a religious publishing house in San Francisco.

By that time, though, the Russian Revolution had occurred—Ten Days that Shook the World—and to Ernita, as she said to me, this seemed a heaven-sent solution of all her social desires. The glory of Trotzky and Lenin! The theories of Marx! To free the world from capitalistic oppression! To lift the yoke from the neck of the common man! Soviet Russia seemed then to her the beacon light of liberty; the exemplar of a new and saving social faith. Her eyes turned to Moscow—to Lenin and Trotzky and their giant labours.

But at the same time, so swift was her sociologic thought at this time, she had already left the Socialist Party, having been drawn to it simply, as she said, because of its stand against the war and the economic principles upon which it based that stand. After joining it, as she said, she soon found the organization to be a fixed, dead thing, unable to satisfy her longing to

plunge into active work against the capitalist order which, as she saw it then, was responsible for the war. So after that, and before the Soviet explosion, it was I.W.W.ism that had appealed to her as the most definite way in which to do something for mankind. She had quite naturally travelled from pacifism to socialism and an understanding of the class struggle, and from the Socialist Party to the I.W.W., the most militant labour organization in America, and so from that, of course, to support of the Russian Revolution, not only because it was a revolt against an imperialistic war and meant the overthrow of Czarism, but also because, as she understood it, it was a workers' revolution and the proletariat had established a dictatorship that was likely to succeed.

However, and strangely enough, as she explained to me in regard to all this, having become engrossed in the defence of members of the I.W.W., who were being arrested continually, she had missed completely the historic significance of the organization of the Communist Party in the United States in 1920—the party with which, because of her convictions, she really belonged, and which, had she known of it, she would have joined. Instead, it had seemed to her then that the most courageous and advanced elements in America were fighting with the I.W.W., when, as a matter of fact, the Left Wing of the very Socialist Party she had come to despise was joining the Communist Party.

“I did not realize,” she said to me in regard to this, “that this American Branch of the Third International, which had arisen out of the victory of the Bolshevik Party in Russia, was the party with which I really wished to be.”

At the same time, as she also explained, the People's Institute on Market Street in San Francisco was the centre of anti-war, pro-Soviet Russia, socialist, anarchist, and I.W.W. elements. Here were a workers' school, library, theatre, and tea-room run by emigrant Russians, mostly Jews. George Sterling and other literary lights came occasionally to their plays, and some of the more radical newspaper people, like Norman Springer, actually took part in them. Before the armistice the police were in the habit of raiding these head-quarters looking for draft evaders. After the war the raids continued on one pretext or another, but always in the search for radicals—



people who would not think as their fellow-Americans wished them to think. And it was of this institution, once she had joined the I.W.W., that Ernita became secretary and for which she worked day and night in its library, school, and theatre. In fact, as she said, she was on fire with the nobility of the cause she had espoused.

It so happened, however, that not long after she became secretary, the business manager of the organization was arrested and tried under the Criminal Syndicalism Law, leaving Ernita alone to carry on the Institute. Next, the police, unable to crush the organization in any other way, condemned the building as unsafe for public meetings, which it was not, and so stopped activities there. It was then that Leonard suggested that she give up the work—for a time, anyhow—and stay home. He was, he complained—and truly enough, I suppose—leading a dog's life—no home life at all. He also complained that she did not care for him, but for a cause.

At that time, however, as Ernita assured me, she was in no mood for such arguments, and passionate as any crusader for the cause but nothing else, her husband included. "I really scorned domestic life," she said to me once. "I had been married three years and most determinedly still did not want to have a baby and settle down. Primarily opposed to motherhood, for myself, of course, I feared I would be tied down, my psychology of life changed, myself turned into a household drudge as were most of the women in moderate circumstances about me. A second, and subconscious, reason for my unrest was unquestionably my lack of love for my husband. I no longer really loved or respected him, although I was not without sympathy for him in one way and another, and this manifested itself in constant phases of irritation which did not do away though with his never-failing tenderness to me. As I think of it now, it must have been that he was not sufficiently definite in his convictions, or at least not sufficiently strong to establish them against mine. At any rate, I felt myself to be mentally the stronger, and that irritated me."

Left without the Institute work she tried to get into trade union work, which seemed so essential in this class struggle. Next to the Institute, as she explained to me, was an art shop which made picture frames, book ends, and candlesticks to

look like metal by applying plaster to wood—drawing the design while it was wet, sandpapering, and then putting on a coat of metal, and polishing. And by degrees, and in order to continue in the labour world, she learned this process. But after a few weeks, and before she had been fully admitted into the picture framers' union, the plaster dust from her work had so affected her lungs that she had to give that up. Just at this time also she was informed by a friendly detective, who had conducted many raids on the Institute, but had always left her alone, that a warrant had just been issued for her arrest on a charge of criminal syndicalism. This as she said appeared to her to be a little too much, since at the time and in her opinion there was nothing much left, in America at least, worth going to jail for—and particularly in connection with the Institute. Hence—she fled to "The Retreat."

But then another blow. For just at this time she found herself pregnant, for the second time, and worse, because of ill-health unable to have an abortion. This made her terribly resentful, and as she said she proceeded to take her resentment out on her husband, who, as she knew, saw in a child the salvation of their married life.

"I used to look at him and think," she once said to me, "'to imagine that you and a child of yours, and your needs and desires, should be considered by you as an offset to a passion for humanity in me or anyone—to the welfare of millions, maybe!'"

But just the same along came the baby, and with it, not so very many weeks after, a day when Leonard himself was badly injured in a motor accident. He had accepted an invitation to preach at a suburban church and after the services was walking down the highway toward the bus station when an automobile came up behind and struck him, breaking his hip. For ten weeks he was helpless in bed, and as Ernita saw it she simply had to put aside everything to take care of him. As for the baby, motherwise she devoted herself to it with the same conscientiousness that she applied to any labour. It was a passion for a time, even though she chafed under the realization that at a time when a new order was being born into the world in Russia, and when she so much desired to aid the world by joining with it—serving in some way—she was tied down in San Francisco to sordid domestic duties.

Later, though, when the baby was a little older, came the period of the organization by radicals in America (and especially, in so far as she was concerned, in San Francisco) of technical aid for Soviet Russia. And in regard to this, as she explained: "I was aflame with opposition to the lying and yet smug policy of our government, which would permit it to say, as it did, that it was not doing one thing to interfere with the new Soviet power in Russia when at that very time it was really sending men and arms to 'protect our interests' and, incidentally, supplying the Japanese and British with arms wherewith to attack Russia. These facts I gathered from radicals, of course."

At this time, as she said, Leonard, sensing her unrest and fearing some erratic and troublesome (for him) move on her part, came forward with the suggestion that they both might help in this organization of technical aid for Russia, since just at that time Lenin had authorized a call not only for aid, but the assembling in America of an engineering body composed entirely of Americans—which eventually was to take over a great mining and steel manufacturing project in Central Siberia (the Kuzbas Colony). In fact, as soon as possible this body was to sail for Russia. Hearing word to the effect that apart from principal technicians there would also be room for many minor workers, such as clerks, book-keepers and secretaries, Ernita became wildly enthusiastic. Because of her experience in book-keeping, stenography, typewriting and secretarial duties, she considered herself eminently suited to aid here. And Leonard, seeing how intensely interested she now was, with his usual astuteness and practical studiousness, began to study accounting in the evenings in order to be able to go with her—in case she did so decide—as an accountant. To be sure, neither she nor Leonard knew the language, but this was to be an American colony. And although there was to be no money at first—their expenses for the first year to be advanced by themselves—still she was wholly fixed upon going—wishing, as she said, to sacrifice at least something to the great cause. And on this as well as her account, Leonard was willing to go with her.

As for the baby, in the face of two grandmothers willing and anxious to take care of it, she saw no reason why she should

not leave the child. She would not, as she slyly argued with herself—seeking to excuse herself, as she said—be gone for ever. Next, perhaps, and soon, the baby could be brought to Russia, or she would return. But mostly, though, she refused to think too closely, as she said, because first there was an ethical problem here which she could not quite face or solve to her satisfaction, and next, because as yet the call had not come. But when they were thoroughly prepared—even with funds, saved or borrowed from Leonard's mother—and when the baby was a year and a half old, the call did come, to go to Kuzbas in Central Siberia.

"And then came the real trial," recounted Ernita. "For although I thought I had prepared myself, still when the time came I found it almost unbearably hard. I could not quite exculpate myself for deserting my baby. At the same time, there was the cause and the adventure. In this crisis it was Leonard's mother who insisted that we go and leave the baby with her. Always ready to stand by her son, whatever his beliefs, she was by now heart and soul in the cause because he was, not because she understood it in any way. And whether it was motherly of me or not, in this crisis it seemed to me that this was my opportunity, not only to escape from an unsatisfactory existence as a housewife, but to satisfy my passion for service—to prove that a mother could do the world's work and still be a mother."

At this point it was that I called her attention to the fact that by her own admission she was not proving very much of a mother. To which she replied, "Of course, I know that mixed with my enthusiasm for Russia was a certain percentage of desire to escape from a humdrum marriage with a man who was not up to my ideas of what a man should be. And it did not matter to me that our friends looked at me curiously and said that I was an unnatural mother, or that my mother, although she suffered in silence, made me feel that because of her lifelong rebellion against things as they are she might have carried me too far. I was on fire with this other idea, and while I suffered because of all this, still I went. And Leonard went with me."

But once on the way, as she described it, a burden seemed to drop from her shoulders. She seemed to be born again.

She had prepared herself for hardships, so nothing seemed as bad to her as that which she had anticipated. Yet in Petrograd the first night they were compelled to sleep on the floor of an emigrant station, and later, because of the black bread and sausage they were forced to eat, the only food available at the time, she was very ill for a number of days. During all of this time, as she said, she lay in agony on a bed without springs or a mattress in a dismantled hotel without electricity or water, yet glorying in her service, useless though it then was.

"Worse, at midnight of the first or second night," as she told me, "a doctor and a nurse, each in a white apron and carrying a candle, came into the room where I with others, and all sick, were lying. And opening my eyes, in my very fevered state, I assumed that I must be dying and that this was the Russian custom of laying out the dead. But the hard-used doctor who was in attendance was so relieved at finding that I was not suffering from cholera that he wasted very little time on me, and in consequence I was not laid out, Russian style."

But that was but the beginning. This was August, 1922, and Russia's state was very bad. A famine was just about over, and there was no money, money having been abolished for labour or wage vouchers. Also, railroad conditions were frightful. It took this particular band of zealots two weeks by special train to reach Kemerovo in the Kuzbas Basin, which is in the heart of Siberia. All the way, as Ernita pictured it to me, the stations were crowded with wretched people, ragged, hungry, often homeless and sick, and with them homeless and sick children, many of whom subsequently starved or died. Also, cholera was raging. At one station near Omsk the local officials put Ernita's party in quarantine for two days before they understood who they were. Again, later, the train was drawn up alongside a death house to which the bodies of cholera victims were being carried to be taken away on flat cars! And only vigorous protests to some local officials, who were finally made to understand the aim of this expedition, caused the train to be moved. Again, some preventive sanitary order having been issued, these zealots were forbidden to use the toilets on their train and had to use indescribable places in

the stations. Fortunately, they had their own kitchen car and their own cooks and—though not without friction at times—prepared the food they had brought along.

Ernita also described to me their arrival at Kemerovo, which was as follows: "The mine side of the town was built up on the hills overlooking the River Tom, and the woods nearby were already turning red and gold. The chill and tang of autumn was already in the air. If it had not been for this unexpected natural beauty, I wonder if I could have endured it. But from the time I joined the delegates in New York I had been doing the secretarial work of the organization, and although most of it was petty detail I was only too happy to be occupied. In the colony itself was chaos—lack of housing, mismanagement, and disaffection among the members who had not expected such severities. Wisely enough, my husband had brought along one wide mattress, and on this, turned sidewise, he and I, as well as the chief engineer of the party and his wife, slept side by side for one month before other facilities could be provided. Dirt, cockroaches, bedbugs, bad cooking, discontent, disorganization, hostility on the part of an impoverished population, engendered by the White Russians who had been and still were running the industry—all of these things were present, and none of them acceptable, and yet none of them discouraging to me. For at last, as I saw it, I was busy about the great work of bringing into the world a new and better order, concerning which so long I had dreamed. Better yet, I found myself much needed, which was heaven to me then. For had I not always abhorred domestic drudgery, and here I was at last freed of it entirely, and this was unbelievably soothing to me. Not only that, but my dream of being free like a man to do the world's work, even though under such hardships, was coming true.

"But then," as she added, "came the winter—a real Russian winter—snow, bitter winds, dry and yet piercing cold. The Russian management, more or less antagonistic because of the 'White' element still partially in control, made sure to give the American organization the worst part of the one big office building, and there it was so cold that we worked in our coats, felt boots, and fur hats. Also we worked long hours and received only the Russian 'pyoks' or food ration which

had been introduced during the war period of the Commune. This consisted of bread, potatoes, and a little meat."

Ernita, as she said, was at one and the same time secretary, typist, librarian, postmistress, timekeeper, assistant book-keeper, etc. etc., and liked it. Better still, Leonard and she had a room in the best house in town, where the American engineers and technicians lived. But when they would come home in the evening from work or from supper, it was so cold there that there was nothing to do but go to bed. And in such close quarters—working, eating and sleeping together—and in spite of her thought that with such an adventure as this her life with her husband would prove more bearable, her irritation with him grew. For he was there—and intellectually as irritating there as ever. And worse, or better, there were present a number of young American as well as foreign technicians, some of them handsome, defiant, and adventurous souls. And most of them, as she soon found, far from averse to affairs with their comrade women, and some, because of their romantic attentions, caused her to view their respective merits in a most favourable way. And as much as she disliked to admit it to herself—and early morality or no early morality—she was, as she said, at the time at least, at last waking to the thought of the delight that might lie in companionship with at least one of the young engineers who happened to attract her at the time, mentally and in every other way. This change, as she said, had sufficient force to evoke in her many thoughts in regard to her own morality, or lack of it, her past views as well as her present. For had she not at one time—and that not so long before—been most militantly moral? And now this raised the question as to what morality was anyhow. And exactly how much did she or did she not owe to it, and why? Confused as well as shaken by this new situation, she found herself going over her own moral past. For years, as she said, she had been quarrelling with Leonard and others because of what she considered their unrestrained lower natures, and now here she was faced by related impulses within herself.

"I was spiritually troubled, I tell you," she said to me one day. "There were days and nights in which I took myself psychically in hand and asked myself how and in what way, if any, I was different from any whom in the past I had abused.

I had done no 'wrong' as I saw 'wrong' then, but also I saw that secretly I now wished to do wrong."

But all this to no end intellectually or otherwise, since all it led to, as she said, was the admission to herself that plainly she was not as she had thought she was. While living in a glass house she had been casting stones. She had objected to Leonard's sensuality, as she saw it now, but only because she really did not care for him. And so these thoughts were by no means agreeable. They were barbed with self-criticism, tipped with the poison of self-contempt. But did they cause her new impulses and desires to lessen? No, they did not, she said. Instead these grew sharper and sharper, stirring her to longings which she could not, as she now guessed, indefinitely endure. Nearer and nearer, as she explained to me, she drew to the young engineer, growing gayer and gayer in his company. And Leonard, still unchangingly in love with her, was quick enough to note this. But since she kept to appearances as much as possible, he could not quarrel with her, though by his manner he showed plainly enough that he sensed the change in her. He appeared to be depressed and seemed to be losing his spirit.

But then in January, 1925, the Soviet Government, more pleased than not with this American management, turned the industry over to the Americans, who in turn proceeded to oust the White Guard officials who had been gouging it since the revolution. Here, by the way, in this region had been some of the bitterest fighting with Koltchak, and some of his men were still here. Leonard, under this new arrangement, was made head book-keeper, but with no knowledge of the language the whole system was more or less of a jumble and a nightmare to him. Also, at this time, or a little later, and in accordance with the New Economic Plan (N.E.P.) introduced by Lenin, the wage system—actual money instead of service slips—was introduced into this colony and so the die-hards and theorists of Pure Communism, of whom Leonard and Ernita made two, were compelled to see what they considered Pure Communism abandoned. And being rank theorists, more wildly enthusiastic than even the Russian Communists themselves, they proceeded to oppose the change as wrong, although Ernita, as she said to me, later publicly acknowledged that she had been sentimentally mistaken.



Yet another thing that caused trouble and ill-feeling throughout these first two years—for in such a colony one could not help taking sides—was the conflict that broke out and raged between the American Communists and the I.W.W. who originally had joined together to make this technical adventure. For, the Russian revolution over, the Russian Communists desired to be wholly constructive and not destructive, and they required constructive men—technicians and managers with business ability—not strike leaders—who not only wished to but were technically able to construct the new state, whereas perhaps a third of the colony membership consisted of I.W.W. members who were actually nothing more than strike leaders and had no more conception of the great constructive ideas of Marx and Lenin than any child. Their idea was to blow up something, not to construct or preserve anything much, and here there was nothing to blow up.

Not only that, but in the American Organization Committee of the colony were two fighting I.W.W.'s, both strong fellows, who had done most of the American recruiting, and hence not easily to be disposed of. All had put their money into this Russian expedition and had come expecting to establish their idea of an industrial commonwealth. On the other hand, there were many who were not I.W.W.'s but Communists and heartily in sympathy with Lenin and his plan. Hence, war. The earliest complaint of the American I.W.W.'s, as Ernita said, was that there was a lack of democracy in the management—too much technical autocracy—and from the first they had insisted that the workers themselves should run the industry. But the workers were not technicians or managers. They had no managerial sense—hence could not manage. Their own leadership thus far, as she said, had demonstrated the utter impracticability of such a system or lack of one, as theirs. Their theory of management, as she explained it, included colony meetings to decide quite every technical as well as social point, and this gave rise to arguments, abuse, threats to blow some of the Russian engineers into the river, besides consuming endless time, until at last it was obvious to all but themselves that the situation was impossible and so ridiculous. So when the Russian Government, after an investigation from Moscow, finally turned the industry over to

the colony on condition that it be made prosperous or reassigned to the government, the new director, an able Hollander by the name of Rutgers (who had secured for himself the support of all those in the community who were not I.W.W.'s), simply put an end to this foolishness by organizing the industry for work like any other industry under the laws of the Soviet Republic.

"But what a blow to my I.W.W. friends!" commented Ernita. "And to my own idealistic notions also! In San Francisco I had been in such close sympathy with the I.W.W. that here in Russia for some time I could not believe it possible that I could change or see things differently. Yet I did. Only, for sentimental reasons, I suppose, I still stuck with the I.W.W. group here in its conflict with the Communists. For as I argued in regard to the Soviet's American and foreign supporters, even if they did happen to be theoretically right in this case, certainly they were a petty, bigoted lot and harder on these American I.W.W.'s than they needed to have been."

Nevertheless, the time came, as she said, when sympathy or no sympathy she could no longer stick with them. As she pictured them, they were too erratic, those I.W.W.'s—too little interested in real—and in the Russia of that day so necessary—constructive effort, too much concerned with their own rights and privileges or, if you will, freedom and democracy. And so at last she decided to break with them, not too sharply or openly but slowly and surely, and go over to the new management, which she felt sure would do more for Russia than ever they could or would.

But now Leonard, possibly because of his wife's leanings toward this more conservative group, and his doubts of her personal interest in him, maybe, sided with the I.W.W.'s against her. Their rough straightforwardness and courage doubtless, as she said, appealed to his sentimental nature. Always a good fighter for the under dog, as Ernita described him, he also liked being heroic.

"I think he dramatized himself to himself," was the way she put it. "But still," she added, "I must not be unfair, for there was honest bitterness in him at this time because of the treatment accorded these I.W.W.'s, who by then had gone on strike and were actually deprived of their 'pyok' or food

ration. They had demanded to be sent home, but Rutgers, the new director, was in Moscow at the time, and the chief engineer, a Russian Communist, was afraid to take the responsibility for sending them back in the middle of the winter.

"I remember stopping at their barracks one evening with Leonard," she once said to me. "They still had some of their last month's 'pyok' left and were cooking on the typical Russian peasant brick stove. An inch of frost was on the small-paned bunk windows. Tobacco smoke—dirt—disorderly bunks. Also wild arguments. But on my part painful silence, due to my inability now to agree with their position—all the more painful because they were such fine, honest-to-God men. As in San Francisco in times past, we all sang 'Pie in the Sky,' but for me the old kick had gone out of it. I was sad, for now, as I saw, I was really no longer a 'Wobbly,' but a Communist. And when I finally did desert them, they, too, were very sad. For there was gloom in defeat for them over there. But by spring almost all of them had cleared out and were making their way back to America or some other part of Russia."

And then it was that Leonard also wanted to go back. For, according to Ernita, having noted the attentions of the young engineer and fearing their import, perhaps he was troubled and perhaps hopeless in regard to his future relations with her. For, had he ever been able to control her? Besides, in America were his son and mother. But by then Ernita could not, as she said, think of leaving. She was interested in more ways than one and gave as her excuse that she would not break her two-year contract, that she was needed here. And her opinion was that her husband believed her. But her dominating reason was, as she confided to me, that she had fallen in love. For among the young engineers was still the one who had interested her so much at first—and now more than ever. A Communist and a graduate of Cornell, his young, strong, somewhat dramatic personality appealed to her. There had been and still were many talks between them—about Communism, I.W.W.ism, the problems of Russia, the personalities of Lenin and Trotzky. He was interested in Lenin and his programme and believed in him. He saw, or thought he saw, that if Russia, or for that matter this particular

enterprise, was to succeed, it must be through strong, practical men (practical in all but their romantic ideals), who would make sound and for them more or less unprofitable use of their time and ideas on behalf of Russia. And, as he pointed out, there were such men—Rutgers ; Di Polchi, an Italian ; Simpson, an American ; Grvensing, a Finn—willing to work for almost nothing. The I.W.W.'s, he was sure, could not supply this self-sacrificing and disciplined support.

And since in his mind as well as in his curly hair and blue eyes Ernita saw beauty, devotion, practicality, she could not help but feel that the Communists were right, the I.W.W.'s wrong. And enchanted by the prospects of this different life, she saw only, or at least too much, the value of what was being achieved here. Life at last was perfect. And in Siberia !

And then, or about this time, came news of the arrest in New York of the members of the New York Kuzbas Committee. America was going into action against Communism. And in this connection, Leonard, troubled by his life here and also anxious to see his boy and his mother again, proposed to Rutgers that he be sent back as a witness for the defence. And since witnesses were very much needed, this was agreed to. So in June of 1925, when Kemerovo was blooming in almost tropical luxuriance, he left, and to Ernita's great relief she was at last alone. Her romance with her young engineer was now free to blossom as best it could under the difficult conditions which this peculiar colony represented. And, driven by desire, she shut her mind to inward psychic complaints or voices out of the past and opened her eyes to his.

"Love in Russia, or Siberia, and among these strange and to me always fascinating people !" wrote Ernita to me once—and in regard to this period of her life. "The difficulties of it materially—although psychically or morally there were none, for these people do not take life as we do. They see love and change in a fatalistic, and hence in a more resigned and indifferent way. Why quarrel with what happens, with what is ? 'It happens'—is a common Russian phrase. 'It is'—another. Are you harried by a state which you cannot endure ? Get up and go ! And why not ? What harm ? Some will die, of course, and some will mourn. But another will be born. And whether you go or stay, always some will die,

or mourn. And so why grieve as to who is to be injured or who is to profit? Accept life as it is. Do as you are strongly impelled to do, and let whatever it is that makes life see to it that no harm follows. That is their philosophy, and I am sure that I do them no general injustice in so expressing it."

And so an untrammelled courtship on the part of the young engineer with Ernita listening, since even now, as she said, she was unable to break with the old ties. "I had to have time to think," she said. "And so for several months did nothing but talk to my love." But then, letters from Leonard in New York and later in San Francisco urging her to return home, and she was thrown in the opposite direction—into the arms of the young engineer, as it were. For, once Leonard had left her, he also apparently could not bear to think of the old ties being severed permanently. Sometimes, as she said, he painted bits of the old days, or of the baby, or of his need of her, that cut and burned. At other times he upbraided her. Yet here, on the other hand, was this new, strange, provoking, intriguing world and in addition this new love tie. Also her personal zest for a love that for the first time meant something to her. Also work. And personal freedom. And back in America, as she saw it, only household drudgery and slavery. She justified herself and her decision to give herself to the engineer by choosing to believe, as she explained, that neither Leonard nor her child needed her, but wrote that she would take the child whenever he really did need her, though she would never take him away from his grandmother if she continued to want him. (A subterfuge, of course.)

And so passed another winter, and under conditions almost as trying as the first, as Ernita said, yet because of this passion, finally realized as free love, easily endurable. According to her picture of all this, Ernita lived in a little room in the huge, homely community house built by the colonists—a frame structure which she described as having such thin walls as to offer no stop to the slightest noises but rather if anything to magnify them. And yet—and at the same time to offer shelter to all of the bedbugs in the district. More, because of the limited housing facilities she was compelled to share this same not only with her own new love but also with a teacher whom she had known in San Francisco, a cultured woman no

longer young but who, like Ernita, had also found her first romance here. Also and by degrees, and as trying or impossible as it may seem to some, these two finally reached an agreement—never clearly worded yet thoroughly understood and practised—which related to and governed time as well as space, for their respective romantic meetings. And so all four managed to be fairly happy in the midst of dirt, noise, and lack of privacy. Fortunately, the following spring, the two were allotted a larger room in one of the newly-built and attractive little two-room log cabins on the edge of what Ernita described as a lovely wood near Kemerovo, where she insisted that she was unbelievably happy. Food—clothing—conveniences—what were such things? What other than romance (even here, where she had come, as she thought, to serve sacrificially) was important? The flash and flicker of temperaments intensely drawn to each other by responsive moods and dreams and the illusions of those newly in love, were all, or nearly all, that interested her at this time.

As was natural, during this time, her correspondence with her husband, as she said, reached the point where it was quite distracting. He was unhappy. He was in America and with his son and mother, but he was not with her. And now, as he wrote, he could not do without her. And she, as she now saw, could not do with him. It could mean only suffering and unrest for her. Torn between her love and freedom here and her older and still functioning conscience, she now began to pity Leonard and to feel conscience-stricken about her child. Hence, by the following summer, and in spite of her intense craving for her lover, she had actually decided to go back. For, as she now said to herself, what, after all, was free love? Dare one truly and finally break with one's sworn obligations? Was there anything to the marriage tie, really, or was there not? Sometimes, racked by these thoughts and Leonard's moaning letters, as she once confided to me—"I walked the floor, suffering because of my mind—this unescapable Puritan conscience of mine."

One thing, though, a letter was a whole month on the way, either way, and so it was almost impossible to keep up with her own changing moods or Leonard's. For when she had about decided to leave her lover and, without mentioning him,

of course, had so written her husband, he was answering one of her letters in which she had insisted that by no means was he to return to Russia—that it was useless—all was over between them. Or, again, when she was faintly intimating that possibly a reunion might be effected between them on some agreed terms, he was writing her that her last letter was final with him and that he was not coming. In the end, though, he always wrote that really he could not do without her—that she must let him come back. And her conscience continuing to scratch her she finally decided that she must.

One of the things that motivated her in this conclusion, though, was the temperament of her young engineer. He was, as she was beginning to find and as she told me, too young, too full of his own plans for the future ; too incapable, with the natural restlessness of the young, of sensing the importance to her of his stability. In short, as it had begun to look by then, it was not deep love in his case, or she was not his true mate—if any man or woman can be said to have an enduringly passionate mate. Rather this particular passion, or ecstasy of love, or adoration, or what you will, was in his case merely for a season. Hence the endless controversy with her husband, some of the details of which she had shared with her engineer, had opened the way for him eventually to hint that in case she wished it he did not wish to stand in the way of a reconciliation, a confession which was exactly what she did not want.

“But there are two sides to my story,” said Ernita to me once. “My engineer had met Leonard and knew of my child. Perhaps besides he read things into my conduct which he could not like or endure. I will not venture to say. Nevertheless, those Siberian nights and days with him were wonderful ! The walks and talks in the great winds and snows ! Sometimes, even now, there is an ache so sharp that I dare not look back or remember too well.” Another thing was that Rutgers, the director—and to her surprise and satisfaction idealistically—had by now fixed on her as a most valuable assistant. For in addition to taking dictation, keeping books, typing, filing, and answering correspondence, she was able to prepare specifications and lectures or papers from notes given her, and by the aid of which he or she could speak anywhere. This caused her to feel more secure than otherwise

might have been the case. At any rate the two conditions or situations operated to cause her to permit Rutgers, who knew of and was interested in her situation, to finally cable Leonard suggesting that he come back with his mother and child and offering him a satisfactory position, since, as he troubled to point to her, if it was freedom that she was really seeking it would be easier for her to settle her marital troubles in free Siberia than in America.

Thus advised she wrote Leonard suggesting that he return and offering to make a compromise arrangement whereby while not actually living together they should have joint responsibility for the child. But to this he replied that he would not come unless she agreed to live with him. But that she said she could not, or would not do. The old life was dead. And the mere thought of it was gruelling. And America, with all its conventional ways and thoughts, as she said, was, for her, dead also.

"But do not imagine that in those two years I did not serve the Soviet Government well!" said Ernita to me, once, "or my engineer either. We slaved. Cold was nothing. Poor food nothing. My dresses and furs were jokes—my underthings rags. But I did not care. For I was clothed by an ideal, fed by one, warmed by one. Truthfully I was a slave to the spirit and the dreams of Lenin as I understood them. He, and he alone, as I saw him—his eyes clear, his personal ambitions dead—was fighting one of the world's great fights. I think I loved Lenin after I came to know of him. I never saw him. I never even dared to go and look at his body in the little mausoleum in the Red Square in Moscow, for I knew I would cry."

But at the end of two years, her prince's contract up, he decided to return to New York. There was a girl there, perhaps, as well as his parents, and a position as representative of the Moscow Government. None the less, so great was her infatuation, that Ernita went with him to Moscow, where for an additional month in his company she awaited Leonard's final decision in regard to her last proposition to him. This was that in case he decided not to return—as just a month before he had written her he would not—she would go back to America.



"Conscience, duty, or maybe mere resignation because of my own loss," is the way she explained this to me. "I offer no excuses."

Yet for one month in Moscow, before her Prince Charming left and after writing thus, she lived with him while he arranged for his trip. At the same time also, she found work in one of the great Communist international organizations then seeking to spread the Communist doctrine abroad. And again, as in Siberia, she was a man of all work—typist, librarian, reader, translator, even lecturer on occasion. And after more than two years in the wilds of Siberia, as she said, she found the cultural life of Moscow most stimulating and delightful.

But after her lover's departure for America, real loneliness. For by then there had been another shift of mood in regard to her husband. She could not and would not return to America. No. He must, or might, come to Russia, but never would she return to him there. But in the meanwhile a wire from him asking should he come to Russia would she agree to live with him? Once more, as she said, and after two days of agonized thinking, she was compelled to cable him: "Cannot accept. Leaving for Siberia." Her reason for this last statement was not only a sudden revulsion against reunion in any form but also because Rutgers, then in Moscow, had urged her to go back to help in the office organization at a new mine which the enterprise had just taken over. And that for her spelled interesting work as well as a possible escape from her husband. For Rutgers had assured her that his need of her was great, and in the face of her troubled spirit Siberia, as she insisted, seemed like home. There once she had found freedom and love. There she had known her greatest happiness. So next day she left for Kemerovo, the scene of her so recent spirited liberty and bliss.

"It was in December," she told me, "and for the first time in Russia I travelled 'soft'"—(a term for first as opposed to second or third class). "By then many of the railroad lines had been reconditioned and there were first-, second- and third-class cars. Besides, the Kuzbas enterprise paid my fare."

Kemerovo when she arrived was deep in snow. Worse, her room-mate without permission had taken in her sweetheart and there was no other room available at the time.

Conditions being what they were, Ernita accepted the situation and lived with them. "They proved very kind to me," she said, "and in my wretched state even this seemed like home."

But now an additional cable from Leonard saying that he was coming! He could not stay away. She must receive him. And next, in February, a summons from the Communist organization in Moscow to return and work there. A Congress of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was about to be held and technical help was required. Russia being very poorly equipped in this way, and since by then she spoke and wrote Russian after a fashion, she was most valuable. So in spite of her previous decision not to live with him ever, she wired Leonard that she would meet him in Moscow.

And once there again, as once she described this period of her life to me, Moscow seemed very beautiful. The old palaces, the bright churches, the Kremlin, the Kitai Gorod! Jointly with a German girl who talked little else she was given one small room in the Lux, a large rambling hotelly sort of affair with communal kitchens and baths on every floor—the Communist International head-quarters—where in spite of all her troubles, as she said, life seemed fairly livable. Her work in connection with the Party conference was exciting, as during the Plenum they worked in the Kremlin Palace and she met all of the notables of the Communist International and the Russian Party. (By then Lenin had died.)

But then again Leonard arrived, looking wan and worried, as she said. But now, as he explained, he had really come because by the time her cable telling him that he should not come had reached him he had gone too far in his preparations for returning to her not to come on. Besides, as he indicated, he still hoped for the best in connection with her. Couldn't they agree, for the child's sake, on a future domestic existence together? Surely. Would it not be better so? Was this restless changefulness really worth while? But by now, as Ernita said, she was in no mood to be either weak or merciful. True enough, she had lost her lover, but also, as she said, she had lost all zest for the old life. And the closer Leonard's approach, the more wretched it had seemed. A living death, as she phrased it. Also, although she knew that her former

indecision had been caused by her fear of hurting Leonard, none the less, and at the very worst possible time for Leonard, she now, as she said, chose to be firm.

"I don't know how I could have been so cruel," she mused once in my presence, and most regretfully. "He came, and I saw him, and while we did not quarrel, at last I set forth all that was in me against him—marriage, America, his beliefs—oh, I don't know what all! Also the fact that never, never, never could I or would I live with him. And in a few days he left again—alone, hopeless—to take the position in Siberia that Rutgers had previously promised him. And I, very much torn in my own mind, stayed on in Moscow, still feeling that life should do something more for me. I might not deserve it, and again I might—but life being what it was, a game of chance, one might hope for anything. Besides, I still wished to work for Russia. It is so, all through life, that we deny things to others that we beg for ourselves. I have often thought of that. I was sorry for what I had to do, yet I felt only relief at Leonard's departure. Thoughts as to the old days, my baby, my general cruelty, maybe, only crept over me afterward. But they are still with me."

Yet in Kemerovo, and to her astonishment, as Ernita said, it presently appeared that Leonard had found another distraught soul, like himself, a young American woman who like Ernita apparently was taking this opportunity to free herself from an unsatisfactory husband in America. Only now, as she sniffed and, with a magnificent, and yet, as Ernita phrased it, "so human and customary inconsistency," Leonard was giving this other woman his moral support in her struggle, although in Ernita's case he had nothing but criticism to register. And by virtue of this support of his, in part at least, this woman had already obtained one of those quick Russian divorces and had gone to live with Leonard. Of course, as Ernita said, she knew nothing of this until later. She had only noticed that after leaving Moscow for Kemerovo it was not long before Leonard's letters became quite cheerful. Also that he did not trouble to hold her to her promise to at least come to Kemerovo to see him when the Plenum was over.

But in July—and this without any planning on the part of Ernita—Leonard's mother and his boy arrived in Moscow.

And for the sake of appearances as well as affection for her son, Ernita felt compelled, as she said, to secure a month's vacation and take both to Kemerovo. (Rutgers had provided a pleasant cottage, overlooking the river, for Leonard's mother and the child.) Only this, as she found afterwards, was a fatal move on her part. For, in her absence, Leonard had been getting along most happily with his new love and making headway against his old feeling for his wife, and all that her coming could do was to open old wounds. Besides, so loyal was he to the old tie that he was still hoping, as she found on her arrival, that she would return to him. But as yet not saying anything to the other woman, even spending nights with her while by day he was about trying to persuade Ernita to come back to him.

Yet because of Leonard's mother and child as well as a good job waiting for her in Rutgers' employ, and because she did not yet know of the other woman, she had *just about*, as she phrased it, finally decided to stay and make the best of him, when something happened that caused her to change her mind. For one day, her room-mate—the same one with whom she had first lived after Leonard's return to America—suddenly began to upbraid her for interfering with Leonard when she no longer cared for him and when at last he had found an opportunity to be happy. "She even denounced me," exclaimed Ernita, "as a hard and selfish woman, who did not want Leonard for myself yet would not let him be happy with another. Dumbfounded, as I was," she said, "and made furious because of Leonard's deception in regard to this, I sent for him, but received instead the lady, who had intercepted my note."

And then the interview that followed! The epithets and characterizations of herself indulged in! Ernita smiled at the recollection of it all. But by then, she said, she had realized fully the anomalous as well as unintentionally cruel situation in which her return had placed this other woman. And was sorry. For how could it look otherwise than that she had come to injure her? Even to speak in her own defence, as she explained to me, meant not only harm to Leonard but to this woman, for whom she was so sorry. For then, of course, this woman would see how little Leonard

really did care for her and that might cause her to turn on him. Intensely troubled, as she said, she decided to make a superhuman effort to save the situation for Leonard, because whatever happened to her, she wanted him to have someone. And so that evening at sunset, when the river was loveliest, she sat with the two of them on the bank of the Tom and lied heroically for him until his mistress finally believed as she wanted to believe—that Ernita had been jealous and trying to get him back.

But to mend matters as speedily as possible, the next day even, she and Leonard drove in a dilapidated old droshky to a village some twenty versts away, where in an old school-house the Soviet Court of the region was sitting. And there, with the whole village population sitting about on the benches and crowding in at the doorway, they applied for a divorce. And in twenty minutes, as such things then went in Russia, it was granted. Since then the period of time required has been extended to two weeks.

“Then jointly we paid the fee of eight roubles,” she laughed, “and arm in arm walked down an avenue of whispering and smiling villagers more like a newly married couple than *divorcées*.”

Nothing was then left for her, as she said, save to go away. Leonard’s mother, knowing only the other woman’s side of the story, favoured her and was disgusted with Ernita’s conduct. She herself was ashamed of her long, sentimental and, as she now saw, useless variability in regard to all this.

“I felt that if I could just slip away that night, they might still be happy in Siberia,” she said. “It was hard to think of leaving my boy. We had just got acquainted all over again. Just the same, the next day at sunset I boarded a train for the next junction, Topki, on the way to Moscow. And of all those I knew, only Leonard saw me off. And now, worse luck, he was not only tender but sorrowful. And after that, that ride in the packed, fourth-class car, in the gathering darkness toward Moscow, was the saddest of my life. Oh, how sad! Never had I felt so totally alone, unloved, misunderstood. I cried forlornly in the darkness, but no one noticed, and that was something.”

Back in Moscow, she said, life once more became interesting.

For there she worked in the library of the Comintern, and while there were many difficulties with her Russian fellow-workers in her efforts to introduce American methods, nevertheless Moscow itself was thrilling and intellectually stimulating. For soon, as she said, she found a young Irish woman friend, attractive, witty, full of a comforting *blague*, and together from then on they shared everything—room, bed, past and present troubles. By degrees, as she said, she found herself interesting herself in the theatre, and finally wrote up the Moscow winter season for the American Communist press.

But then, after a year in Kemerovo, Leonard went to some other city in Russia to teach while his mother went to Denmark to attend an International Communist school there, leaving the boy with Ernita. The other woman, as Leonard was now reporting, was leaving for America. She had tired of him. But Ernita now had a hard struggle to get along as Leonard was unable to contribute much if anything to the support of their child. To make matters worse, Rutgers now gave over the Kuzbas management to a Russian director, who, jealous of the Americans, immediately proceeded to install his own specialists in their places.

Shortly after this, and as I learned from other sources—not from Ernita—a great scandal centred around her in connection with the new commercial director of Kuzbas—a Georgian—then officially resident in Moscow. It appears, as I was told, that she had gone to him for some money owing her by the enterprise. Immediately on seeing her for the first time, he found himself so interested that he could not accept a refusal of her interest in him, and proceeded, without encouragement on her part, to attack her. Naturally, she felt herself shamefully dealt with, and immediately after ventured to complain to a famous and powerful woman Communist, who, whether Ernita would or not, insisted on action. There followed a trial, a conviction, almost an official execution. However, Ernita begged for a modification of the sentence imposed and secured it. But the man received a four-year sentence.

Then in the spring of 1927, more trouble. Leonard was shot by bandits in Tomsk, and his right arm paralysed. At once he came to Ernita in Moscow, where she took him into

her room and cared for him. Afterwards, with their boy, he went to Berlin to meet his mother, and from there to France for a rest. But later, when he tried to return to continue his work in Tomsk, and in spite of any influence Ernita could bring to bear, he was refused a *visé* by the Russian Government. (The ways of the G.P.U.—secret police !) This final blow, after his many cruel defeats, depressed him so that he all but took his life. But later he managed to obtain a position in England and so left for there.

When I last saw Ernita in Russia, which is where this portrait had its birth, there was still much to darken her mood. For she was one who had grown almost too fast intellectually, and while still strong in the Communist faith and all that it meant in the way of freedom for women, she was no longer one who was convinced that it was without faults or that it would not need modification and strengthening in various ways. Besides, her old sureness as to her own virtues and worth had been greatly shaken. As I saw it, she needed rest, a change, some emotional connection which for all her faith in the necessity for freedom for women would ensure her at least a little affectionate stability. She craved deeply, of course, someone whom she could permanently respect as well as love. Yet is there such a one for any ? Or such a state for any two ?

Yet in Russia, as I saw it, one may do much. And despite various ills then and afterward, Ernita had decided to stay, because, as she explained it to me, she had learned that life is a dangerous, changeful, beautiful and yet deceiving thing, good or worth while or not as chances aid one, yet always fairly endurable even at its worst. Besides, as she once said to me, and with a courageous smile : "In my youth and zealotry I had imagined that Communism could and would change the very nature of man—make him better, kinder, a real brother to his fellows. Now I am not sure that Communism can do that. But at any rate it can improve the social organization of man, and for that I am still willing to work."

# ALBERTINE



## FOREWORD

THE following is neither more nor less than the romantic and very intimate confidings of an American sculptor of some standing in his day, who because of his interest in me and my work, seemed to feel that I ought to know. He craved always dramatic realism and sought to inspire it in others. And because of his keen wish that something be done with his story, I do not hesitate—now that he is dead these six years past—to reconstruct from the many details with which he provided me the following portrait of Albertine, which holds me quite as much as some of the more personal pictures that relate to myself. As you may well guess, not only the character details, but some of the principal places and illuminating incidents are most thoroughly disguised. None the less, being *quite like*, they make a portrait that is true.

THE AUTHOR

## ALBERTINE

**A** GIRL of the Diana rather than the Hebe or Aphrodite type, Albertine interested me from the first not only by her statuesque, reserved and apparently remote beauty, but also by a certain quiescence of body and mind which sprang from genuine understanding and taste and was as composing and soothing to my frequently ruffled temper as anything in life may well be. For it was always restful where Albertine was—city, seashore, mountains, plains. Indeed, sea, sky, forest, silence, seemed reflected betimes by her temperament, moods and understanding, even by the dignity and poise of her presence. She never wasted or deflected her energy in either intense excitement or reducing morbidity, but was chiefly calm and thoughtful, and by instinct rather than by any marked study that I could discover had early harvested much of what we mean by wisdom.

It was through Olga, as I recall it now, that I first met Albertine. This was at an afternoon piano recital in the lesser auditorium of Carnegie Hall. She had joined our box party to chat for a few moments during the intermission. At once I noticed the pointed oval of her face ; the thickness and smoothness of the yellowish-brown hair above the foggy grey eyes ; the sensuous, clinging grace of her body ; the length of her thin, supple fingers. She wore no jewellery ; a silver fox lay loosely about her throat. After commenting on the soloist, her talk ran to persons known to most of those present, but—a friend was coming on from the west ; a sister of hers had become engaged ; her husband had just been called to California on business.

I wondered about her and her life, afterward, and finally questioned Olga. The story that she told me—confirmed by many conversations with Albertine through subsequent years of contact—almost twenty—interested me not a little. Although poised and serene at, say, twenty-three or four, she was, none the less, the eldest child of a poor and domestically turbulent family, which had lived in a little tatterdemalion

house in lower Jersey City opposite the Communipaw Station of the Jersey Central. Her father, as Albertine herself much later (and almost tolerantly) explained to me, was an eccentric and an associate of eccentrics and ne'er-do-wells. When he worked, which was seldom, he did painting and cabinet-making, but he believed that his true vocation lay in the direction of music or the stage. He played the violin fairly well and read much, principally the classics. But being of a fiery as well as semi-artistic turn, he was quick to take umbrage, often without any real reason, at what he considered dark, sly and most undutiful slights on the part of his comparatively large family. In reality, as Albertine pointed out, all of the seven children stood in constant awe of him. Worse, he frequently got drunk and not only refused to work, but sank into the most sombre and growling of moods, remaining about the house at such times and criticizing the conduct of his family.

Still worse, despite his dubious and self-approved learning, he was in no particular earnest that his children should acquire any. On the contrary, they were to go to work at an early age (as he invariably claimed he had), and so help make the home of which he was the dominating spirit the easy, comfortable thing that it should be—for him. In consequence, Albertine, being the eldest, and in the face of her mother's defensive tactics and tears, was compelled, and this at the age of fourteen, to step out and seek work. There were so many children and they had such wretched clothes. Her two younger brothers, she said, were so poorly clothed that they were ashamed to attend school, and the next youngest sister was already complaining that other girls ignored her and her brothers as being too low in the social scale.

The first and only work she obtained was in a paper box factory. For she was so attractive and different—so very attractive and different, as I can well guess—that within a week, and although she was but fourteen and had scarcely mastered the art of making a box, the floor manager, and later the proprietor himself, making their rounds, noticed her and stopped to talk with her. How old was she? Where did she live? What did her father do? And by the proprietor, who was fifty-five, German, and very dictatorial if not exactly aggressive in her case, she was asked one day if she knew anything about book-keeping.

She did not.

Just the same, and all things considered, he then and there announced that it would be as well if she would come to the office and have someone show her how to keep books, or at least one book. They needed an assistant in that department. More, once she was installed there, as she related to me, her elderly employer came around and exchanged a few words with her. How was she getting along? Did she like the work? (No comments concerning any of the mistakes she was sure she had made.) Then passing her in the factory hall one day he paused to say that he hoped she was still happy in her new work. She said that she was, whereupon he queried concerning a little drive in the country on Sunday afternoon. (He was a widower, his wife having died three years before.)

"But the thought of my father—what he would do if he found out—as well as the age and dignity of my admirer, overawed and frightened me," Albertine once explained to me. "I think I must have showed my trepidation in some way, for he touched my arm as if to reassure me, said he was not so bad, even if he was my employer, and he would talk of it another time. And after that he showered me with attention, and finally asked me to marry him."

"Well, why didn't you?" I asked her.

"Because I was more romantic than I am now. I thought of anyone over fifty as very old, impossible, like my father." And she laughed. "But just the same, I did like him a little, or maybe I felt a little sorry for him. Mostly though, I was thinking of a boy, or just boys."

Meanwhile, as she also related, there had appeared on the scene just about this time the individual who three years later was to become her husband. And what a husband! Since I came to know him very well, I can describe him. Small—that is, no taller than herself—dark, handsome, lithe, alert, close-knit physically, with an easy, off-hand, genial and disarming manner, yet which same could most easily and swiftly become aloof or evasive or intimate and confidential as the financial or other values prevailing might warrant. Indeed, he possessed as shrewd and non-moral and non-altruistic a brain as I have ever encountered. No wonder that in his chosen field—which eventually related to furnishing and

decoration in the grand manner and objects of art the prices of which ran into millions—he became very wealthy and that his establishment came to be regarded as the most significant and exclusive of its kind in America. “Designed” or “Furnished” or “Decorated” *by Millerton* ! What marked distinction accompanied that name ! Its very lettering, even, in an oval of carved roses above the door of his salons in upper Fifth Avenue ! Exteriorly no suggestion of a shop ; rather of a private residence, with two tall, narrow, oval-arched and closely-curtained windows in front, shadows and harmony within. And Millerton himself rarely to be seen—only associates and assistants.

But all that was long after Albertine first saw him, and quite long—almost fifteen years—after I met him.

“When I first saw Phil,” Albertine once confided to me, “he was on his knees arranging ties and socks and gloves in the window of a Jersey City haberdasher’s shop, but not too intent upon his artistic labours to look out occasionally and ‘make eyes’ at the passing girls, I can assure you !”

To which Millerton, present and listening, retorted : “But just once, my dear, and only at you, you know.”

“Uh-huh ? Yes ?” was Albertine’s dry comment.

None the less, there he was that first time—if one was to believe her—a spindling slip of a window-dresser, earning the munificent sum of twenty-five dollars weekly, and to be observed occasionally between seven and eight in the morning when she was on her way to the factory or between five and six in the evening when she was returning home. A little troubled at the time by the overtures of her elderly employer as well as the state of her family, for conditions in her home were decidedly distressing, she did not connect herself with Millerton or his looks in any way. Rather, as she narrated, her thoughts were principally upon her mother whom she greatly loved and by weight of connection on her father, also, who was loafing and drinking and occasionally threatening her mother with a beating. More than once Albertine had had to interfere, threatening to complain to the police as well as his labour union. More, as regards her brothers and sisters, it looked then as though they also were growing up merely to be sent out into the same factory world as herself. Naturally, therefore, the elderly manufacturer, with his hints of ease and

luxury for her in case she chose to accept him, loomed large, if colourless, when lo, here was this dapper window-dresser, on his knees, his shirt-sleeves held up by bright brown elastic bands designed to match his trousers and belt ! And smiling and "making eyes" ! ("I did not !" "You did so !")

Nevertheless, though she looked and smiled in return, she did not think of him as any solution to her problem, she said, but merely as an attractive somebody who might become interested in her if opportunity were afforded him. For she had already half decided, because of her family and her looks, that she could not afford to marry a poor man, and certainly none such as this.

Passed several days, and then one evening Millerton coming out of the store and hailing her as she was passing. He had been waiting. And would she not permit him to introduce himself, walk home with her ?

"I could not help but be attracted to him," she told me, "in spite of all my dark thoughts. He was too good-looking and so high-spirited. I never saw such a nervy, cool person ! Besides, as I came to know him better, I was intrigued by his resourcefulness and self-confidence. He always seemed so sure of his future, what he was going to do—which was at that time, first, to get a position with a rival window-dressing concern that paid more, then save money and in the not too distant future go into window-dressing on his own." She laughed as she always did when she contrasted his early ambition with his later station and wealth.

A thing that also interested her, she said, was his obvious faculty for making money on the side. Before she had known him a month, he was talking of a half-interest in a little haberdashery shop which he and a younger brother were to open in Newark and for which one of her brothers might work. Another tactful thing he did was to take her to visit his family, which was somewhat better placed than hers. And incidentally, through an uncle of Millerton's who owned a motor-car, Albertine and her sisters and brothers were soon introduced to a slightly more colourful existence than hitherto they had known—not more money but more entertainment.

Naturally, such tactics, since he was also personally attractive to her, dissuaded Albertine from her mood in regard to her employer. For now, listening to Millerton—or Phil, as she

was accustomed to call him—she began to believe that he might have a worth-while future. His head was always so full of schemes for getting on. Even then, as she said, he was talking of learning more about furnishing and interior decoration, since somebody (as he himself once told me) had pointed out that window-dressing was really a specialized branch of the decorating art, and that if he wanted to follow up such a line of work, he would do well to look into some of the decorative art magazines and maybe connect himself with a school or firm which dealt in fine furniture and expensive decoration. And this, as he now confided to Albertine, he was proceeding to do. He had not very much money to spare, but he subscribed to the best magazines, studying them at night. Next, he applied to several of the important decorating houses for a connection.

Finally, after six months of waiting, he landed a small salary and commission job in the rug department of one of the large New York department stores which also boasted a decorating section of which this rug department was an adjunct. And here, so great was his taste or his personal charm or magnetism, combined with his persuasive powers—and I can testify to all—that presently he was earning almost double his salary in commissions. This fact so impressed the financial management of the store that he was promoted to an assistant-managership of the home decorating section. And later he was called to the management of a larger department in a Fifth Avenue store, where he came in contact with types of customers entirely new to him and who were destined to formulate as well as enlarge his own taste and capacity in every direction, providing him eventually with not only the introductions but the incentive and the means to develop such artistic resources and judgments as then centred in him.

But before this time he had already persuaded Albertine to marry him, since his then position paid forty-five dollars a week. And there was a child in prospect—which died in six months. First they went to live in a small apartment in Jersey City, which later, as his skill and salary grew, they deserted for a larger one in the then commonplace upper west side region of New York City. Here, a year or two later, a boy was born to them. A little later—when Phil had become chief of the designing department of one of the great

Fifth Avenue decorating establishments—he selected an apartment in the lower Seventies near West End Avenue—which was where I first visited Albertine.

Still later—about a year or so—he met one Oakley Cloyd, a society man turned decorator and with, as Phil once said to me, the most valuable social connections in New York, but lacking the commercial sense or skill to turn them to profitable use. Aware of this lack, Cloyd immediately saw in Millerton a solution to all of his problems and made him his assistant. And it wasn't very long before he was relying on Phil for this and that and taking off more and more time to go to Newport or Bar Harbour or Palm Beach while Phil stayed home and took care of things. Oh, yes, indeed, Cloyd had found the right man at last—his fate or his finish—for inside of ten years Phil Millerton owned Cloyd—business, friendship, loyalties, all. In short, he *was* Cloyd & Company ! It was only after Cloyd's sudden death at fifty-six that Phil incorporated as Millerton, Ltd.

But this was not his stature at the time I met his wife at the concert. While connected with Cloyd, he had not yet reached the partnership stage. But he was working quite consciously toward it, as I later discovered along with other details when, via Olga (who, as I have said, was a close friend of Albertine's) I was invited to dinner at the Millertons'. I recall being impressed on that first visit by the taste displayed in the furnishing of their not too large place—the design of the furniture, the paucity but beauty, and in several instances rarity, of the objects of art ; the well-chosen books and magazines on art, architecture, decoration, town and country social life, as well as any number of volumes on the history and development of arts and decoration in foreign lands. I gathered that Millerton was a keen student of all of the branches of his calling, since not a few of the books and magazines were then and there lying about open and with passages marked.

My second impression of Albertine on meeting her again was that she was even more lovely than at the concert. In a close-fitting pearl-white evening gown, her rounded arms and upper bosom bare, she moved about fully conscious of her charm, though a little too reserved, I thought. For so frequently she merely looked and smiled faintly. Later I decided that her reserve was less of a manner than a condition, for she



had a smile and a look at times which conveyed more than words, and what she did say exhibited a tolerant understanding and awareness of quite all that was said or referred to. I found her well-informed in art, literature and music; also that she and her husband were personally in touch with a number of celebrities who were far from dull mentally or in any other way. None the less, on this occasion, her aloofness troubled me. I could not tell whether she disliked me or whether I was merely failing to make an impression of any kind.

On the other hand, and without much willing or effort on my part, Millerton and I soon became quite chummy. For we were both interested in art, and he was the sort of person who enjoyed to jest—or “kid,” as we say—and better yet as I saw not to take either himself, his work or this electro-chemical scene any too seriously. Rather, he was naturally at once an agnostic and a pagan, accepting only such commercial and social rules as were unavoidable and yet always exhibiting a courtesy and cordiality if not exactly loyalty to any that was enticing to a degree. In short, I have never known anyone who did not like Millerton. He was a man who at once made and used friends, returning their use and aid with either practical tips or benefits of one kind or another or if not with those then with the most ingratiating of smiles.

At once, and because of a notorious art smuggling exposé rampant in the newspapers at that time, we fell to discussing luxury and taste in America, and he made the, to me, very shrewd observation that America was just then awakening to an interest in luxury but didn't know very much about it or about furnishing and decoration either. Hence, it could be sold almost anything. And he illustrated his point by one or two amusing stories concerning aspiring art collectors (multi-millionaires) who were being robbed by this and that method or fake article, and then added—(a searching conclusion, I thought)—that to lead in his field in America, one had to guide. I decided then and there that I was talking to an opportunist, optimist though he might be, a man who knew what he wanted and was fairly confident of his ability to obtain it.

Presently he was telling me of his connection with Cloyd, which he had decided would prove very valuable in the course of time. Cloyd, as I have said, had social connections,

background, whereas he himself had nothing as yet. *But*—his smile and eyes seemed to say ! My final conclusion was that this man was so clear-cut and resourceful that he could not possibly fail at anything he undertook. Life, wealth, this, that—all were taken with a grain of salt. It was at once fun to work and to play. Most people took life too seriously but he was not going to be one of them. I smiled and liked him the more.

But Albertine. She was so attractive and yet restrained and apparently convinced that this home life—the pleasure and direction of her husband's home—though after all not much, was really all that was in store for her. I wondered, and occasionally found myself looking at her across the dinner table. And then a comment that she once made interested me very much. "Phil looks on me as a home fixture," she said, smiling at him, "but he really doesn't know what I do or where I am. He is so busy !"

"Oh, don't I ?" was his dry reply. And they looked at each other amusedly, though not without affection. (About a year later Albertine confessed to me that she never quite knew whether Phil troubled to keep track of her. "But he has so many people working for him," she added, "and they are about most of the places I go to—the theatre, the opera, concerts, restaurants.")

But it was that first remark that set me to thinking about her in connection with her husband and myself. For she was so really attractive. And then Olga, on our way home from this first visit, saw fit to air certain conclusions in regard to the Millertons which gave me more to think about in this connection. Phil Millerton she painted as having no ideals beyond money or purely material and maybe social success. (The latter she could not be sure of; he seemed centred too definitely on sheer material means.)

"Perhaps that's because, like Al"—she was speaking of Albertine—"he had so little as a boy. His father died when he was only eleven, you know, and there were five children, so he had to go to work. First he sold newspapers, then he was a messenger boy, then he clerked, and I don't know what else. But there is one admirable thing about him. He is absolutely devoted to Al and her family and his. Since he's moved to New York and got this start with Cloyd, he's

put both families into better houses and got the boys good positions, and now he and Al are inviting them everywhere so as to give the young people an opportunity to meet better people than they could meet in their own circles."

And this certainly proved to be true of this anomaly in the shape of a man. For money, while it appeared to be an end with him, a wholly worthy objective, was not regarded in any miserly or selfish sense. It was money to do with for others, apparently—Al's family and his and their own joint futures. I have never known another case quite like this. I think he lived for business, for at night in his home, and even if he came home as late as eight or nine o'clock or entertained a few of his customers or fellow-schemers in his field at dinner, he was sure to retire afterward to a little den or office and work or study until two or three in the morning, reading up on museums and collections and studying new methods of obtaining and transporting and selling to the then rapidly multiplying army of wealthy men in all parts of America some of the glorious art loot of the world. I have looked in on him often at midnight in his little chamber, his catalogues and papers and volumes about him, and smiled at a devotion which was really not wholly prompted by a love of art in the last analysis but rather a love of money, or the power and position, freedom to do and be which money, as he saw it, was certain eventually to obtain for him.

But this, as Olga now troubled to make clear to me, was exactly where the shoe pinched and the rub was. He was, she admitted, the most studious and self-educated person she had ever known. But on this account, much too unconscious of, if not exactly indifferent to, the obvious charms and merits of his wife.

"Why, he works night and day ! It's a wonder he doesn't have a breakdown ! And Al, too !" Olga's tone was almost angry. "He never seems to think about anything except business any more. He's become so self-centred that he's begun to neglect Al shamefully, although I don't believe he realizes it. He's up and off to the office before eight and he's never in time for dinner. And how Al hates that when there are guests ! More often than not when she arranges for a dinner or a show or a concert, he calls up at seven or half-past or a quarter to eight and explains that he can't make it and that she's to go with someone else."

And true to her picture, I recalled that Millerton had been delayed in arriving this very evening. He had telephoned, so Albertine explained, that he was going to be a little late, not more than a half-hour. And in about that time he did arrive, a little hurried-looking but so exceedingly brisk and engaging that one had to forgive him.

"You see," continued Olga, "Al isn't material like Phil. She's younger than he is by six years and she isn't practical the way he is. She likes some money for herself and her family, of course, but she doesn't like to see him devote all his time to getting it. And if trouble ever comes, that will be the reason for it. It hurts Al terribly, I know, though I believe she's becoming more or less resigned. He's been doing it, you know, ever since they got married.

"But that doesn't mean that he's really indifferent or unfaithful," she hastened to reassure me. "As a matter of fact, I know he cares for Al as much as he can care for anyone, and it's for life with him. He never thinks of another woman. I know he likes me, but I have never been able to get him to make a sign. Besides, he gives Al absolutely everything she wants that he can afford. You see how she dresses and how their home looks. She has all the servants she needs. Next week she's to have a new car, and he's planning a place on Long Island for the summer. He's really crazy about her, and she knows it, but he's so wrapped up in his work that he takes her for granted, and when she complains he says it's all for the future. But Al says she's young now, and if this goes on, she won't be. And I know they quarrel about it at times."

I began to understand a certain wistfulness, a far-away look in Albertine's eyes. And now, because of Olga's delineation of the state of this family, its past and present, as well as the charm of Albertine and the force and ability of her husband, I became interested on my own account. Besides, since Albertine was fond of Olga and had sensed her interest in me, she very soon fell into the habit of inviting us—to tea, to dinner, to the theatre or a concert. And soon it was no uncommon thing for us to find ourselves together—with Millerton usually absent. But also I noticed that we made out quite well without him.

Then one afternoon—but this was months afterward, by

the way, and when Albertine and Phil and I had become most friendly—I found myself alone with Albertine. Olga—who had numerous musical affiliations (was a fine pianist herself)—had promised to bring a certain violinist to tea at Albertine's, but neither had appeared. It was a late January afternoon, I remember. Later Olga telephoned why. But so it was that at last Albertine faced me alone and apparently as serenely as ever. And presently, as I had come to expect in connection with Millerton, he telephoned that he could not get home in time for dinner.

"But Mr. Berenson is here," I heard her say. His answer I did not hear.

Presently she rejoined me, and with a something in her voice or manner, or both—I can scarcely recall the exact shade of mood—said: "Well, then you and I will have dinner together alone. Do you mind?"

"I? Mind?" I smiled.

But perhaps I should say here that during the months that had elapsed since first I had been a dinner guest here, I had come to regard Albertine more interestedly and personally. She had expressed her admiration for some of my sculptures, and we had talked of my work and my attitude toward life. She invited such confidences, since she was so kindly and wisely intelligent and understanding, so serenely and beautifully poised at all times. If ever Albertine gets a great deal of money, I often thought, she will make a graceful and tasteful use of it, may even enter society if Phil should change or she should marry again. She had an air and a way, a superior air and way. Also a discriminating taste in the arts. I recall some of the attractive bits of furniture harmoniously placed in her living-room. There was a lovely Cyprian bronze mirror for one thing; an old Spanish chest (in which she said she stored her linens), and a tapestry or two. And she loved music, and from the point of view of a combination of society and music, opera. She was one of the few persons I knew who made a sharp distinction here, and at a time when grand opera, with all of its racket and maladjustments of temperaments to music, was still considered by the public as the *summum bonum* of all musical good. As for her literary taste, she preferred Hardy, France, George Moore, Henry James. But how was she to read, she complained, with Phil, during the last three

years at least, continually bringing people home to dinner, mostly for business reasons, and to be entertained afterward at the theatre or a night club? And all this to be done "right"!

"At first I found it hard," she explained to me, "because I tried to do too much myself. Then I decided that my looks were more important to Phil than my physical services, so I made him pay for a Japanese cook and an English butler. Now my only complaint is that half the time when I have everything prepared perfectly, neither he nor his guests appear." She looked at me oddly as she said this, with an indescribable lift of her long, almost level, eyebrows. "But I am getting used to it," and she smiled, a little sadly. "Six years have taught me a lot. And Phil's really a wonderful man. But I do wish he could think of something besides business."

But during the period referred to there had been certain little things which related just to us. Once I recall—oh, the second or third visit—it was before or after dinner, I forget which. Olga was playing the piano, and beautifully. Phil was smoking a cigar and reading—the *Encyclopædia Britannica* or a book on art. Albertine was about to enter the room when, arrested by something lovely in the music, she paused to lean against one of the columns which divided the foyer from this main room. And finally—I often wondered why—her eyes found mine as I sat across the room in a semi-darkened corner. Just then, and for the first time, I experienced a sudden, quivery sensation—heat or weakness, or both—and because of her fixed and yet seemingly unconscious look. Olga, of course, was playing all the while, and dreaming, too. But when the music was done, I sat up, thinking of Albertine. But then Olga said something to me, and Albertine did not look my way for some time afterward. An illusion, I concluded. I am too full of romance! But how lovely she did look! And then I thought of Olga's possible feelings could she have sensed my thoughts.

But there was another incident. Olga, Albertine and I were at a concert. And Albertine, as I recall it now, sat close to the rail a little before and to the right of me. We had by then become quite friendly, but not at all intimate. Despite the previously described look, I did not feel that intimacy was at all possible here. She cared too much for

Phil and was too considerate of her own affairs and obligations. I had told myself that I had no reason to imagine that she would ever be drawn to me. But at an interlude in the concert—whereby a distinguished violinist was holding his audience spellbound—she turned to me and whispered: “Sometimes I feel that I should not come to listen to such things. They make my life seem so ridiculous, so narrow. They only make me unhappy.”

“But why!” I asked. “You have everything. Beauty, opportunity, a future.”

“Oh, no, I haven’t anything. I never will have.”

“Nonsense! What do you mean? Why not?”

“Because I shall never be able to use what you think I have in the way you mean. I can’t do what some people would do. I’m too sorry for people, I guess, or too faithful or considerate.” She looked at me again with those kindly, sweet eyes of hers.

I frowned. For now, it seemed, her significance as a sweet-heart, if not a friend, should be dismissed by me at once. And because of this I was just a little glum and sad. After the concert we went somewhere for tea, and then I refused a dinner invitation and went home.

But still, a little while after—maybe a month—here was this third scene or moment—and I saying to her: “I, mind?” I remember she looked at me oddly, a little nervously, I thought, and left the room, to fix her hair or change her dress, perhaps. But presently she was back, and, some pre-dinner cocktails between us, we sat and talked of a number of things—Olga, mutual friendships—scandal then in the papers. But all the while myself feeling a certain newness, a strangeness in her mood or manner. This now titillated my nerves and thoughts, made me restless and curious.

And then finally she said: “Phil’s had a new piece of luck.” Cloyd was going to take him into partnership. And then she went on to tell me that in connection with this Phil had just closed a big contract for an estate on Long Island which he and Cloyd were to use in some way as a summer sales place. Next, that she and Phil were likely to be moving from here into upper Fifth Avenue or thereabouts.

“Splendid!” I said. “Haven’t I told you that one of these days you’ll have to play the rôle of a great lady?”

But she scoffed at that. "Never, with Phil," she said calmly. "You don't know him as I do. He's not interested in that sort of thing. He doesn't care enough about anything, unless it's money, maybe. And I sometimes think he doesn't care so very much about that. Once I thought I knew him, but now, well . . . and besides, to do anything socially we'd have to have millions, and they're not made in Phil's work. He'd have to make it through investments or speculation, and I don't know whether he's really interested in that. Mostly he cares about decoration as Cloyd does. And we haven't the social connections that Cloyd has. We have only acquaintances, introductions, trade connections. Oh, I know."

"But you, personally? You surely need never despair of anything," I assured her.

"Oh, needn't I? Well, think what you please. But I know. And I'm not despairing. For I'd never leave Phil, whatever happened to him. Besides, I'm not unhappy. He's been too good to me and everybody connected with me. I couldn't! I wouldn't! Never!"

Yet her eyes. They looked so dreamful, needful.

And then we sat there, each looking at the other. It was almost dark; there were only a few lights in the room. But I recall one light that played on our faces from the side. And Albertine's looked pale and a little sad and a little romantic, more so than ever I had seen it. And then I looked into her eyes, and suddenly, whether because of her or myself, or both, I felt something—admiration, desire, a coming out the one to the other, and in a new or clearer, more understanding, more sympathetic way.

"Al," I said, "you're lonely, aren't you?"

"No."

"Oh, yes, you are."

"Oh, no, I'm not! Not at all, I tell you!" Then as suddenly: "Yes, I am, too. Very, at times."

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Married to the wrong man?"

"Oh, no, I won't say that! It isn't true. But I'm young and he's so wrapped up in his business. It's terrible! But I shouldn't talk about it."



She got up, agitated, intense, and walked away. I followed.  
 "Al?" I said inquiringly.

"Oh, yes, I know," she said. "I know what you mean. I do like you. I might as well admit it. You've guessed it before, haven't you?"

"Yes," I said. "Anyhow, I've wondered."

"And yet you like Olga," she added.

"Yes."

"Much?"

"Quite a little," I admitted.

"But you don't really love her, do you?" She arched her head.

"Oh, Albertine, you know how these things are. You know how life is. But why discuss Olga? It's you . . ." and I took hold of her arm. But as instantly she backed away toward a window.

"Be careful!" she cautioned. "Don't forget there are servants."

"Yes, I know."

"And Phil might come in."

"Yes, I know all that. But you, Al, you really care?"

"Yes."

"Much?"

"Yes, very much."

"Well, then . . ." and I moved closer to her.

But she shook her head. "No, it can't be! It won't ever be! You needn't think it will be, because it won't! I know that!"

"And why not?"

"Because it won't."

"And why not?"

"Well, I owe Phil too much. Oh, how much! It would be terrible! I would never forgive myself. I couldn't! Besides, I'm not really as strong as you think I am. I'm a coward, afraid, for him, myself, everybody. Oh, you don't know how it is. But it is. Besides . . ." and she paused, looking at me.

"Besides what?"

"I'm afraid of you."

"Of me?"

"Yes. Oh, you know how you are. You can't care for

anyone entirely. It isn't in you. You love life, beauty, love—but just me, anyone—look at Olga ! ”

“ Oh, I know,” I said crossly, “ but you understand all that. Besides, there is an attraction between you and me. Do you deny that ? ”

“ No.”

“ It's strong, isn't it ? ”

“ Yes, but just the same, I wouldn't ! I couldn't ! I owe Phil too much. You'll think I'm crazy, but now that I've gone so far I might as well tell you that I knew we'd have a scene just like this some day. I knew it the first time we met. It was at that concert, do you remember ? But I knew too that I wouldn't ever be unfaithful to Phil. I may suffer, but I can't help that.”

I drew close and put an arm around her. As quick as though she were meaning to push me away, she was in my arms, pressed tight against me, her face wax-white, her lips against mine. Then as swiftly, before I could murmur, she was loose again, and walking quickly toward another room. “ Wait,” she called, almost coldly. “ I'll be back in a moment.”

So for ten, fifteen minutes I sat there alone, thinking. And wondering at the strangeness of such a scene. And with scarcely a previous sign. When she came into the room again she was fresh, calm, in her hands some roses for a bowl on the table, and snapping on all the lights she went about arranging this and that. But when I attempted to take her in my arms, she repulsed me.

“ No, no more,” she said, almost coldly.

“ But haven't you just told me that you cared for me ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And you really meant it ? ”

“ Every word, yes. But it won't do you or me any good. It can't. It won't. If you are going to insist . . . ” and she looked at me in a curious, troubled, even slightly defiant way.

I was disappointed, cross, but not really angry, and I liked her so much that I couldn't leave and wouldn't believe her. Instead we talked and talked, until at midnight Phil came. And by then we had agreed that we were to be the best of friends ever. She could count on me for deep, helpful friendship, and I on her. Wherever they went, I was to come if

I could. I would be so welcome ! And anything she could do for me—all I needed to do was to call on her—for I was to remember that she loved me, oh truly, and how much ! And I went away, thinking that it would not be long before I should possess her, for all she said.

Yet, believe it or not, and in the face of related incidents—some more passionate, some less, but always furtive—I could never get her to keep even an agreed upon appointment, whatever the time or place. Rather, the thing went on and on, with her continuing to resist me, yet always with the reiterated assurance of her love—she would always love me—I need not fear that she would ever change. Ah, if I only knew how pleasing, thrilling even, it was for her to see me walk in unannounced or hear my voice over the telephone ! Couldn't I understand ? Wouldn't I believe that it was only because of her loyalty to Phil that she refrained from satisfying my every desire ? For truly, in some reminiscent as well as present grateful way, she cared for Phil. Only this thing between us was a living flame ! Terrible ! It kept her half sick and yet courageous and hopeful, too, and so made life endurable. Would I not believe that ? And yet join me she would not. I must wait—wait until something changed her, made her sufficiently powerful to resist her gratitude and sympathy for Phil as well as strong enough to take what above all things she desired.

But eventually—and almost in spite of her—the thing did come to pass, and lasted, with changes of mood and periods of regret—even quarrels and temporary dismissals—for nearly three years, ending finally in a warm and durable friendship.

We had gone to inspect a rather large seaside estate on the south shore of Long Island, not too far from Southampton, which Phil proposed, as he had previously in connection with another estate but that had come to nothing, to use as a summer head-quarters for the furtherance of art sales to such prospects as would be impressed by the particular brand of entertainment and social contacts he, with Cloyd and his friends as catspaws, planned to supply. It was a new departure for the Millerton-Cloyd concern, and for Albertine involved prospective social trials such as she had never previously endured and with the details of which she was not wholly

familiar. In the main it consisted of playing hostess to a group of more or less purely mercenary hangers-on of Phil's who were there through him and Cloyd to sell something on a commission basis. Along with these were some genuine, if impecunious, social figures (left-overs of the old Ward McAllister "Four Hundred" days) who were to lend a seeming if not actually genuine social *flair* to the scene and so impress such wealthy prospects (principally western multimillionaires) as could be induced to come there. Also, perhaps, or actually some real social figures, friends of Cloyd's who would come because he wanted them to, and whom, through Phil—his managerial skill—he proposed to almost royally entertain.

And indeed the situation was, in its way, interesting even fascinating to me, as well as to many others. And marked the beginning of a most varied, colourful and interesting life that flowed through and around Albertine and her husband. Yet in the end it affected both of them most unsatisfactorily and eventually left Albertine, at least, cold and even disappointed, if not entirely distraught. As for myself, my own participation in some of its most attractive features, I shall never forget.

But it is here that I must pause to descant on Millerton's absolutely phenomenal rise, the like of which I have never seen paralleled, in his field at least. For by now he was quite wealthy—in the eight or nine hundred thousand class, I should say—a leader in his chosen field and with, as Albertine once bitterly and yet ironically explained, a small social and trade court of his own. Those broken-down French and Italian counts and ladies! Those English gentlemen of title but no means! And all so willing to do his bidding for the money and introductions (Cloyd's) with which he was prepared to supply them. The errands they did for him! The art acquisitions and ultimate sales to the new-rich which they effected by all sorts of intrigue! An almost shameful commercial story, I should say. And yet, as I have many times since asked myself, was he really so evil, since he was in trade? Or necessarily the friend of anyone, since all in that world wore the mask of friendship for profit only? Could he have been? Was he even a faithful husband or a friend of art? I sometimes wondered, because he was so absorbed, free, indifferent, whatever any particular situation required. And

yet always so genial, courteous, happy and humorous. I was never quite weary of meditating on him.

And yet for me he seemed to have some kind of a liking, which though it seemed to me at times injudicious, I put down mainly to my power to listen to his fantastically, almost ridiculously, pagan views of what constituted order, honesty, wisdom, good policy ; in short, anything and everything with which we find ourselves surrounded on this fair and absolutely undecipherable scene. Sometimes I used to look at him in genuine amazement, since he appeared to have no conscience at all, although a kind genial good will and sympathy which gave as freely as they took.

"The bunk" was what he used to call his business. And yet following that he was capable of bursting into the most enticing and convincing descriptions of this and that rarity—a tapestry, a rug, a chair, a carved English, Italian or French ceiling or complete chamber panelling that he was importing. And at what cost ! Enormous, sometimes ! But to be sold later, of course, for a still more preposterous sum to one or another of the rich "suckers" (the term is his) with whom he preferred to deal. As for the "eastern rich," as he sometimes troubled to nominate them, poof ! Their alleged artistic possessions ? Poof ! By now he had examined, as he said, most of the old great houses in the east and had discovered scarcely anything of real art value in them. The great Astor mansion at Fifth Avenue and Sixty-fifth Street (gone now) he pronounced to be "full of junk" ! The Vanderbilt, Gould, Sloane houses—impossible ! The only people who had anything real or beautiful were those rich western "dubs" who then, by the grace of God and one Phil Millerton, no less, were falling heir to some things really gloriously worth while from abroad !

But ah, the prices he had to charge them ! God ! And the way they "squealed," as he himself worded it at times ! (And here he would smile dryly or chuckle.) But, strange to say, as he also added and with more laughter, once he got them going, they became tame enough and even came back for more. Think of that ! Oh, yes ! And yet, why not ? To whom else could they go ? Who else was putting the time, labour, investigation, this, that, into this truly great

work? Why, through his shrewd agents here and in Europe, and with Cloyd acting as a foil or catpaw, he was combing the entire art market and "salting down" (the words are his) some of the most amazing treasures, provided always, of course, anyone was really interested in that "junk"! And then he would take apart the whole historic art idea and show what forgeries and trickeries had already transpired in connection with this and that, all of which had already so befogged the scene that it was very difficult to be sure of anything. And yet how easy for him to befog the scene still more—make it absolutely impossible for anyone—the best art judges in the world—to *know* and so be sure. Documents, for instance—an appalling fanfare of them—lies, principally, but most elaborately penned or printed and sworn to by God knows whom—which made it possible, as he insisted, to assure the trusting and gullible, even the doubting, purchasers. I used to gaze at him fairly hypnotized by his revelations.

And perhaps because of this, as I say, he seemed to like to talk to me. Or perhaps it was because of Al's and Olga's favour and praise. At any rate, he always seemed pleased that I could be with Albertine when he was not able to be there and so sure of her. And yet, as I often said to myself, how can he be so dull? Or is he? Does he or does he not suspect her or me? And does he or does he not care for her? Yet because of the long period of years in which I knew both, I was finally compelled to conclude that he did care for her a great deal in his strange way, although unquestionably and in spite of himself, his deepest and unchanging love was for his business or trade, which, as he saw it, was, in part, at least, creative. He could make great houses and had, as he once said to me.

But let me return to that proposed summer mansion or sales place by the sea. Albertine and I had taken a car as well as a day off to look at four or five places, and finally at this one which Phil's agents had reported on as probably the most desirable. The house was of stone, brick and clapboard, containing some eighteen or twenty rooms, with a fine wide veranda, balconies, and a most carefully maintained lawn and flower-beds. There were also tennis courts, a handsome bathing pavilion, a lounge or reading room, a large garage, and scattered over the lawn tables with brilliant parasols. It stood

high on a spit of cubistic sand commanding the sea, and inland were some eighteen or twenty acres of bare, rolling dunes, with walks here and there and sea pines and sand-binding grasses. Between the house and the sea stretched a great tawny beach, against which immense breakers thundered and over which gulls hung and distant ocean-going vessels were pencilled like trees. I can still feel the salt and tang of it all.

The house on the day we went there was vacant and cold—it was early April still—but that did not prevent us from roaming in and out and speculating on Phil's dreams or schemes and Albertine's social difficulties or whatever you choose to call them. For she did not relish Phil's idea of using his or her social life as a background for his business schemes. So wandering about this place and looking at the thundering and foaming waves and spray on the beach with an April sun on them, she proceeded to unburden her heart to me.

"You see, it really means that I will be in business, too ; that I will have to play hostess to a lot of people I don't know or don't like and who haven't the slightest use for me except as manager of a sort of country club in which they can do business. But what about me ? What do I get out of it ?" And she looked at me.

"Well, it certainly is a life of sorts," I replied. "As a chance to study and observe a lot of amazing characters, it rather appeals to me."

"Oh, they interest you, of course, and me too, a little as characters, only such contemptible ones mostly ! They're all so mercenary ! I can't tell you ! And Phil is too, only he doesn't really mean to be. He's generous and even lavish with me. My relatives and his—just lavish, that's all. You know that. I can give his or my people nearly anything I like and buy almost anything for myself. But he can't see what a poor figure he makes of me. For, of course, people know—they all do—these society people that he lures. They work for him and do anything he wants for pay, but as for me, well, you know how they look on me. If I would flirt with some of the men, that would be acceptable enough, but anything more, well . . . In fact, one of them once said to me when I repulsed him that I must consider the worlds that lay between us !" And once more she lifted her eyes and smiled wisely in her own philosophic way.

Then she spoke of a certain Count di Brozzio who had recently entered Phil's life—an Italian socially prominent here as well as abroad who was acting as go-between in Phil's approaches to those members of New York society who could be induced to play their parts in this scene, for pay, of course.

"But what a shallow fop he is!" she said. "He thinks of nothing but money, society, clothes, and women, and he'll do almost anything for money, Phil says. He has no heart, really."

And next out of her portfolio of sketches came Lady Weathersweet—no climber, since she did not need to climb, but cold and practical—who was now advising Phil as to this and that and providing his raw multimillionaire patrons with at least a few social contacts, but for a definite price.

"They all make a fuss over me in public," explained Albertine, "but when we meet behind the scenes, that's another story!"

Yet in spite of all this, she took a fair, if not really enthusiastic, interest in all that she saw here and that presumably was to be done under her direction and according to her taste. "Of course," she said, when I enthused over the sea-y beauty of the place, "it can be made very attractive, and Phil will let me help there. But you must come out and see these people, spend some time here. Phil expects you to. He likes you so much, you know. You inspire so much faith in him." And once more she looked at me half laughingly, a look that provoked me to seize her and try to overcome her resistance.

"Al, why do you fight me?" I asked.

"Oh, you know why."

But though tense and pale as always when she felt the least danger, she was now a little sad and relaxed. I felt it intensely—a certain coming out to me, a strong wish behind all this intention never to permit herself to wish.

"Al?"

"No, don't ask me, especially here." She looked decidedly disturbed as she said this.

"Why especially here?"

"Well, you know why. Even if I wanted to, I have no way of protecting myself. And you haven't either. So don't say any more."

"Oh, don't be so cross! You've always an excuse. And



yet you're always pretending to care for me. I don't see why in the devil I go on ! I won't either ! ”

She had a name for me which she used when she was especially moved or tender. It was “ Massa,” Negro for “ Master.”

“ But, Massa, dear,” she said, “ don't be angry. It's you who are always quarrelling. You know how much I care for you and why I act the way I do.”

“ Oh, bosh ! ” I exclaimed angrily. For who was she, I thought, to lead me at her apron strings ? I would stand for this no longer, I said to myself. And then to her : “ This is my last trip anywhere with you. I'm not going to follow you around any longer. You don't care for me, and this is the end ! ” I moved toward a door which gave into a hall and a descending stair.

“ But, Massa, please wait ! Don't go ! Why will you be so unreasonable, and especially here of all places ? Suppose something came of this ? How could I get out of it or explain it ? Would you be the one to help me ? You know how you would act.”

“ Oh, tommymrot ! What nonsense. As though there aren't doctors and birth control ! And of course you couldn't possibly have another child after seven years ! Phil's child.” (I was thinking of her son Braith's age.)

“ Oh ! ” She was startled. “ Do you think I would be willing to do that ? Never ! I care for Phil too much ! I owe him too much ! ”

“ Very well ! Owe him for my dropping out of your life, with my compliments, will you ? ”

“ Oh, well, if that's the way you feel about it, all right,” she answered, “ but I certainly think you are unreasonable. I certainly do ! ”

I strode out and down the stairs to the lower floor and she after me. As I neared the main entrance she called to me to wait. “ Please, Massa, let me go back with you. Don't leave me here, please ! ”

I opened the door angrily, only to catch a view of the beach and sea and the bright shore pavilion that would be so charming in summer with that gay, worthless, conniving company fluttering about. I hesitated a moment and she came forward. In her eyes, her face, was the first trace of that real

sensual weakness that at full tide can undo all capable of it. I studied her. "Damn you!" I exclaimed. Then seeing the power I held, if but for this moment, I decided to act. She desired me. That was plain. As for Millerton, well, did he really care for her? In a homely, friendly way, as a dutiful husband cares for a dutiful wife, yes, but this way, never! Besides, what if she were caused a little trouble? She had admitted to previous contraceptions and escapes.

Without a word I seized her. There was a struggle. As always, only more violently, she protested. At last, exhausted, or pretending to it (how is one to know?) she sank down. I could feel in her even then a quarrel between yielding and resisting. At last, but with mock opposition, I fear (I never could be sure), she surrendered, calling me brute, devil!

Afterwards, complaints. Now I had truly compromised her. What was she to do now? Suppose this led to something, and just now, when she had so many things coming on—this dreadful summer, with all of its obligations? But what did I care?

I stared, amused, triumphant, and liking her more than ever. For now she was really mine. And would argue no more, fight no more. Now we would be real sweethearts, I thought. I could feel it. Only, how dishevelled and strained she looked! Troubled, frightened even, and so all the more attractive. And still railing because of this and that, until finally I went over to her. "Al, hush, Al, be still! You know you like me. You can't hate me. That's ridiculous. Fight if you want to, but kiss me now." And I drew her to me. Weakly she yielded, but with hot tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Oh, I know how you are feeling," I consoled her. "You were loyal all this time, weren't you? Or you thought you were. But were you? You've been caring for me, haven't you—holding on to me against some day when you might not wish to be so loyal?"

And then we argued that. In the end I expressed sorrow, at which she said: "Oh, I'm not blaming you. I've only myself to blame, if I blame anyone. But it's all so sad. Phil has been so good to me and to all of my people." And she cried the more, the while all I could say was: "Ah, Al, please stop. Don't cry. It won't turn out as badly as you think. And you needn't offend any more if you don't want to. I

won't annoy you, or leave you either, if it's going to hurt you so."

There was a more or less silent return in the car. Step by step she was retracing all the years she had been with Phil. And now this, the beginning of a great change, perhaps. At last, as we neared her place, I asked: "What about it? Shall I come up with you? What do you want me to do?"

"Oh, come up, of course. If Phil's there and sees me come in alone, he'll think it strange. I told him you were going along to-day."

And so, up. But no Phil until much later. Business. And in the meantime, Al very sober and charming after dressing for dinner. Yet once more a long, if calmer, discussion of the pros and cons of this situation. The possible result. How she was to do. How I was to act for her, accompany her, in case anything went wrong, so that Phil could not possibly suspect.

And then silence until some two weeks later, when she was positive that she would need the aid of an obstetrician, and that at once. And with me stirring about to find the ideal person, and, as I saw it, finding him. After which, and to my utter astonishment, a sudden decision on her part not to see any obstetrician or do anything save go forward and have the child!

But wasn't there considerable danger in that? I asked. Millerton? This sudden conception after seven years? True enough, she admitted, but more than once she and Phil had talked of having another child, a companion for Braith, and once had actually agreed on it. But something had interfered—a long business trip on which she was to accompany him—for one thing. And recently, within the year, he himself had mentioned it, only she had said no. But now—well now—this very next day, in fact—she was going to announce that she suspected something—carelessness—and that she was afraid she would have to see a doctor, whereupon if he objected—as he always had in the past—well—well, leave it to her. But she had determined to go through with it.

But why? What was her reason?

Well, she had always wanted a little girl, and she had a feeling that this child would be a girl, just as she had been sure of Braith's sex. Next, the child was mine, and more than once, although she had never let herself act on her dream,

she had wished that she and I might have a child. And now here it was ! And should she, for want of a little courage, throw away this opportunity ? Never ! Besides, then and always she would have something of me with her, something of me that she could love and be happy with, and that long after I was gone—as soon I would be, never fear ! Next, if the child was attractive and well-mannered and well-groomed, as she would be, well then, maybe I would never be able to forget completely. She and I, she and I, would be tied by that, however little the whole world might know, however little. And so on and on, with the most romantic and extended thoughts on this score.

“ But supposing it should look like me ? ” I ventured.

Well, what of it ! Who could prove anything ? Phil scarcely noticed Braith as it was. He would never suspect me, or her. She was sure of that—which was the desired end.

And yet at this point, I confess to a sense of something unkind about it all. Phil had been and remained—for all his pagan and practical nature which spared no one in a business deal—so friendly, so after a fashion and in some ways (not all by any means) confiding. And now this. Rather a poor return for his efforts, I felt. Yet all things considered, and particularly since Albertine wished it, I was not opposed. For this was not the first instance of the kind. Others, others. But not without the consent and wish of the woman in each instance. I never forced anyone to go it alone, to do what they did not wish to do. And in this case there was ample money to make life fairly secure for the offspring. Knowing Al, I knew it would be most carefully and liberally provided for. And since my work always came first with me, I was not pained or irritated by the thought that I might not always be permitted to see the child—although that privilege has always been mine. But without the child ever knowing. (When she reached the age of sixteen, she even began to look at me with intriguing eyes. Growing one's own loves, as it were !)

And so, the following November, a girl—presently named Joan. And Al and Phil celebrating the new arrival in the most grandiose fashion. And I myself contributing a modest present. And with Al before and after well and strong enough

not only to go through the summer social activities, but a Florida season following. And with no particular word save a general admission that she was once more to become a mother. And with Phil—believe it or not—and for some, to me most inexplicable, reason—convinced that I was just the person to be around to keep Al company in his absence. There had been no shadow of complaint or suspicion on his part when informed by Albertine of the prospect of a child. “Why don’t you go through with it?” was what she said he said at the time.

And now I would like to add I have never been able to escape a sense of strangeness, even a sense of fatality in connection with this illegitimate girl child of mine, who began to show a slight resemblance to me even as a baby, certainly in six weeks. Albertine would take great delight showing her to me, at times pointing a significant finger toward the girlie’s nose or eye (the colour) or ear (most definitely formed like my own) and making a mouth or giving me the wink when no one was looking. I would play around, would I? I would literally take a woman against her will? Well, see what I got for that! And more, she would soon be able to prove it by mere looks. But never mind, Joan was a darling, and I could go now whenever I was tired of her. For here was my very self, and never, never could I take it away! A pleasant year or two that was.

But before that, the spring and summer on Long Island at the Hampton-Southampton Place, equipped as only Millerton and his staff could do such things! Defiant and even brazen with colourful flowers and awninged tables and chairs and swings and tennis and squash courts and what not, and all in full view of a changeful, warm, rumbling, and all too often foggy sea. And a complete house and garden staff, ostensibly under the direction of Albertine and Phil, but really more or less supervised by di Brozzio and Lady Weathersweet. And the guests! Presto! Over the week-ends smart and interesting groups. Those heavy multimillionaires, of course, but sandwiched in with youngsters and oldsters of what sound or unsound social backgrounds I cannot definitely say. Most certainly some—not a few—were of the surest and hence the most defiant social walks. In addition there were those

ultrasophisticated adventurers of the di-Brozzio-Weathersweet type who knew so well how to command and assemble such individuals as would overawe as well as betray money-bags with social aspirations. Breakfasts, luncheons, teas, dinners, suppers. Dancing, riding, swimming, golfing, tennis, bridge, roulette, baccarat. All the "right" things. But with Albertine complaining to me of the "hollow show."

"Positively," she once said to me, "I cannot tell you how I feel about all this. It isn't like a real home or a real married life."

"But consider it as a show," I said. "It's wonderful—amazing, really, when you think who and what's back of it." I was thinking of Phil—his easy, off-hand, pagan soul.

"Oh, you!" she replied. "That's all you care, I know. A good show. They can't snub you very well. But me! You should see the glances that pass occasionally. Oh, dear, how I hate it all! If I didn't owe Phil so much, I just wouldn't stand it!"

"Come, come, Al," I consoled her, "cheer up! Think of what a delightful place it is. It's better than a club or an hotel, and you have a suite to yourself and nearly everything managed for you. Besides, you know you have some friends. You couldn't be yourself and not have." (For I had heard many nice things concerning her.) "And the thing is going off wonderfully. Lots of people think you are breaking into society."

"Oh, society! A lot I care about society—the kind of people I've seen. Snobs and money-bags. How I wish that you and I could go off somewhere all by ourselves, with just enough money, and then live out our lives, or a few years anyhow. Oh, for just two or three years! I would take those if I couldn't have any more."

I gazed at her. Love, I thought, at last! The approaching baby. I held her close, and presently she resumed her old courage and air.

None the less, that first summer proved to be merely the first step into an ever-widening social field for the Millertons. There were larger and more pretentious places in town; trips to Palm Beach or Aiken, or even London, in the winter, interspersed with flying visits to White Sulphur or Tuxedo or California, as Phil's plans or schemes dictated. And, as I could see, and as such things went along, Albertine rapidly

acquiring the art of mastering servants as well as bringing together, through gifts and liberal entertainment, such a bevy of smart and bright professionals of one field and another as might have served to entertain or at least make comfortable any such world-weary plutocrats as would allow themselves to be thus regaled.

In fact, I recall one grand place on Long Island which belonged to the Vanderbilts and which was leased to Millerton at some frightful cost. And then stocked with servants and social secretaries, and finally programmes or schedules for entertainment worked out. For some the lure was gambling, after the best Monte Carlo fashion ; for others, food and drink and attractive men and women of the stage, opera stars and musicians. Then, of course, there were always the very presentable and conscienceless nobles who were in America for what they could get. And doing their best for Millerton to make the thing come off or go over. And in the main succeeding, so that after several seasons you saw Millerton's name along with Cloyd's in the social columns.

I spent much time with Albertine during all of this, visiting by turns each summer one or another of these at times really remarkable places. For because of the baby she was always insisting that I was to come and see or hear this or that in connection with it, and when I did not, lecturing me concerning my inherent lack of anything paternal or domestic in my nature, until one day I turned to her and assured her that Life was my mistress and my bride, and that out of Life, in such forms as to me seemed artistically valuable, came my real children.

"Oh, you're not telling me anything I don't know, dear," she replied, "but I wish you would take a little more interest in Joan. She's going to be so attractive. If you knew anything at all about babies, you could see that for yourself. She's going to be beautiful. And she looks like you, too, although Phil would never see it. But I can. Can't you, really?"

I looked, and at the end of two years began to note certain things which reminded me of myself. A tendency to look quizzically and sidewise, also a tendency to use her hands in the same manner that I did. And her eyes the colour of my own.

But in the meantime, as the years went on, Albertine accepting quite calmly these seasonal shifts from one great place to

another and all this show of wealth and luxury as something that sprang out of conditions over which neither she nor Phil had any control. Rather, as she frequently expressed it—and perhaps it was this fatalistic mood of hers that so strongly united us—she and Phil and myself were just tools of some moving fate which might have something of importance behind it in the long run. But most likely not. Life could not have any real significance, she often said. Its current objectives were too ridiculous, too trivial—fame, food, technical knowledge wherewith to earn the silly prizes of life, love, lust. “The best that can be said of me when my life is over,” she said to me once, “is that I was good to my relatives.” Her chief conclusion in regard to Phil’s efforts was that he knew how to conduct his business to a profitable end. But when the profit was in, what did they do with it except make a little more acceptable and hence socially more agreeable and so a socially somewhat more recognized show than heretofore in order to do the same thing over. And in addition help their relatives. But of what importance was it all? There were plenty of people on earth as it was, and helping their relatives only meant adding more people to the number already here. And then she would smile and look as serene and attractive as a tall, pale, waxy flower.

During all of the period in which I was in contact with Al, there was but one quarrel and one genuine separation, during which period I busied myself with other matters. But not without thinking of her and Joan and the strange fact that of all the women I had suffered over or who had been compelled to suffer because of me, it should be Albertine—between whom and myself existed really not much more than a platonic friendship based on mental accord—who should bear me a child. And this because in all of the other cases, fear overcame any existing desire for and eventually dictated the elimination of the prospective progeny. And this seemed odd and gave her an appeal for me which otherwise she might not have worn over so long a period of time. But the passing break between us came about in this way.

There came to Millerton just at the time that he was ascending to his highest financial level—those days when he still maintained the great house on Long Island and a winter



palace in Florida—a certain young Chicago multimillionaire wanting a new and grand house on Long Island, where he proposed to entertain in lavish fashion. Also a winter palace in Florida, properly landscaped and decorated and furnished. (As a matter of fact, I am sure that Millerton, through his emissaries, had caused the young Croesus to believe that he needed these things.) At any rate, presto! A most distinguished young architect called in—one of the handsomest and most high-mannered young gentlemen I have ever met—architect by profession but socially most highly placed, who followed his profession because of a genuine love for it, employing decorators, sculptors, landscape gardeners and whom not else to carry out his grand designs. And by degrees a business if not a genuine friendship between himself and Millerton.

And in consequence, architect and millionaire at Millerton's country place week-end after week-end. And much talk in the newspapers and magazines of the lovely palaces being erected and splendidly furnished for Mr. Chicago by the aforesaid architect, whom we will call Stetheridge. No mention of Phil, since he always preferred to be known merely as an art agent aiding gentlemen of wealth and taste to materialize their dreams. That Mr. Chicago happened to be a little crazy and wouldn't know what to do with two such great palaces when he got them didn't bother Phil. He just saw to it that the man who was paying for it all believed that the idea behind it all was important and his own.

In connection with this, trips on the part of Phil and Albertine and Stetheridge. To Europe and to Florida. And Albertine confiding to me that the European trips were necessary because of the great amount of artistic material to be gathered—some two million dollars' worth. Phil, she said, was finding it necessary to make his own European connections and arrangements. And so presently, because of these separations—three to four months in each instance—Albertine and I involved in a quarrel. For, in the first place, as I soon began to note—and more especially after Stetheridge arrived on the scene, letters were scarce during these absences, and when they did arrive, peculiarly colourless, I thought. Next, Stetheridge, who was a man of far too many parts to suit me, was always somewhere with the Millertons when these scriptic

lacks became so noticeable. In addition to being handsomer than myself, he had brains and taste to spare, as well as an exceedingly grand manner which was very enticing to most women—even to Albertine, as I suspected, who all too often had expressed rather withering contempt for the ill-mannered male types whom Phil's business drew about her. In short, he really represented a genuine social position for any woman whom he might choose to share it with. And here was Al, as by now I was privily thinking, serene and lovely and with some means of her own by now. And assuming, as I often jealously thought at this time, that should she change or Stetheridge choose to persuade her to—well, things as strange as that had certainly happened before in this world.

And from people who knew us both, I soon learned that in Paris and Deauville and at Nice and Palm Beach, Al and Stetheridge were frequently together, quite friendly, to say the least, and that maybe Millerton would lose his faithful and handsome wife after all. And as for me—well, would I not be losing Al—a thought, now that I was in danger of losing her, that was not so cheering as from some other past moods it might have seemed. To all of which Albertine, the first time I met her after this and questioned her concerning it, replied that it was all too silly. Stetheridge! Pooh! Didn't everyone know what a flirt he was as well as how it had come about that she and Phil and Stetheridge went abroad together? And could she help it if Phil expected her to be nice to his principal artistic associate? How could I be so suspicious, jealous? Wasn't there Joan? (And Braith, I sardonically interjected.)

But for all that it did not end there, just the same. My pride was hurt. I felt myself belittled by the power which a mere architect and gentleman of social connections could exercise over my own psychic drag. And so, anger; at moments flaming hatred. To hell with her! To hell with Millerton and all his and her shabby crew! I would desert her for ever! Never again! Never! And so on and so forth. Who has not mumbled such curses and ill-wishes and contemptuous comments in the hour of his humiliation?

None the less, I was not done with Albertine. Not for many years. For there was Joan. And I could not help thinking of her. In the next place, I kept hearing after a

time that Stetheridge's interest had cooled, or was cooling ; in short, that there was a popular debutante who was intriguing his fancy and whom Al resented very much. Rumour. Gabble. But despite which I still continued to stay away from Albertine, though there were some scenes during all of which the moods and conversations were of such a nature as to indicate that there was considerable feeling, and of a binding character, between us. For there were notes, at first, then telephone calls, not only from her but once from Millerton, no doubt at her instigation. To him I made some genial excuse for my absence. But when Albertine finally came down to my studio, I held her resentfully at the door.

"But, oh, what's the matter?" she mournfully insisted—and looking at me—I cannot tell you how. She was very near to tears. "How can you act so? You know why I had to go abroad. Didn't I get Phil to invite you, only you wouldn't come?"

This was true, but I was not to be mollified so easily. She had rejected me. There had been few—sometimes no letters. Besides, there were other things to be explained: rumours I had heard, places in which she had been seen with Stetheridge but without Millerton while I was stuck off in New York and for all of which, although she had explanations enough, I was resentful. Only the real truth, as I saw it, was that smarting from the snubs and comments of people socially better placed than herself, Albertine had at last chosen to dream a dream of social superiority, been intrigued by the idea, if not the genuine possibility, of stepping ahead of some of these people who were so very upstage with and sometimes highly contemptuous of her. And how she would have lowered some of them if she had married Stetheridge. Only in the last analysis, as I knew, when it came to the definite business of divorcing Phil, she would never have gone through with it, never. He would have needed to die first. But there was the dream. And she had acted on that or moved in it, much to my belittlement and anger.

And so now, having her here and hearing her ramble on, I took a definite revenge. I accused her of trying to get back in my good graces because of her rejection by Stetheridge.

"You were interested in me until you thought you could

do better," I railed. "But now that that's all over and Stetheridge doesn't want you, you think you can come back and pick me up again. Well, you can't do it! I'm through! I'm interested in someone else. And as for Joan, if she ever really needs me, well, I'll be there for her sake, but not for yours, you can depend on that!"

She was startled. Why, she was never interested in Stetheridge in that way for one moment, or he in her. It was all for Phil's schemes. "Oh, you are cruel!" she cried. And there was a rather dramatic, white-faced and silent departure. And for two months I heard nothing and saw nothing except occasional social mention in the newspapers. But in the meantime, thoughts, thoughts, thoughts. For in the course of time, as was natural, I had grown very fond of Albertine and her world. And there was the tie that Joan had created. More, and this in spite of myself, Joan was a tie. There were hours in which I could actually feel Albertine thinking of me, for unquestionably we had a great deal in common.

And then one day, when spring was coming on and they would be leaving for their country place soon, a telephone call from her. Wouldn't I let her talk to me for a moment? Was I still so angry? Oh, please, wouldn't I not be? She missed me so. Several times during the past two months she had called me up, but I had been out. Was I well? Didn't I want to hear something about Joan, even if I didn't want to hear about her? And couldn't she come down to see me, or wouldn't I come up to see her? And oh, please, I wasn't to get angry. Didn't I have other girls all the time? And had she complained? And supposing she had flirted a little, did it make any real difference? She had never really forgotten me. And was so gloomy these days. Why couldn't we be friends? Besides, one of the reasons she was calling me was that Joan was sick, really sick, with scarlet fever. Of course she was quarantined in a part of the house and the best of care being given her, and she wasn't in any serious danger as yet, only—"But don't you want to come up for a little while, dear? I would so much like to see you."

There was the voice, the old Al most definitely come back, to say nothing of Joan. And so once more after an "Oh, all right!" a visit to the house. And Al, after greeting me

most warmly and showing me Joan under the most antiseptic conditions (doing excellently, as the doctor insisted), asking me to stay to dinner or at least to wait and say hallo to Phil. "He asked after you so often. Why won't you?" Yet with my eventually getting out without doing either, only with a promise—and so a phase of the old relationship re-established.

For while I now told myself that I would nevermore interest myself physically in Al (and did not for over a year thereafter), still there was this underlying friendship which drew us together and held us. At the same time, I really came to feel toward her much as I might toward a mother or sister. Occasionally, as time went on, there was a return of the old desire, but this was more and more evaded by me because of newer and livelier interests. In fact, there were periods later—quite some few years later—when I scarcely more than saw Al or Joan from year to year.

But before those reduced and more or less colourless periods, there were some interesting hours as before with Al and Phil and Joan, week-end visits, concerts, opera, dinners, luncheons, with Al and some of her friends. For, as in the past, Phil was absorbed in his commercial interests and while more than willing to rely on me for Al's chaperonage in his absence, never really willing to give of his actual time—his "full jewelled business hours" as he used often and ironically to speak of them. Yet when present and, as before, resuming those intimate and always revealing conversations which so tended to amuse us both as well as to uncover the extortion and "bunk" that went with his business.

Yet presently, within the next five years, a veritable hurricane of financial difficulties, which might be said to have sprung from this same amused and pagan, if by no means careless, viewpoint of his. For always, as I saw it, he had sheer genius for the work in hand. Up to the storm concerning which I am about to speak, he had gone forward financially as well as socially with great strides. Everyone in the art world knew of his skill, even if all did not know of some of his strange and varied arrangements.

For instance: Millerton, Ltd., would arrange, for commensurate compensation, of course, for private and altogether gorgeous apartments for certain rich and somewhat nervous old clients who were no longer happy with their wives and

desired younger beauties to share their dreams. Even the beauties might be arranged for if necessary. More, there were multimillionaires in other cities who were actually impelled to come to New York by ideas instilled in their minds by persons "planted" in their employ or company by Millerton himself for this very purpose.

And one other feature. Above the door of his establishment, in a section boxed in from every side and so free from observation, sat one of his shrewd assistants or, as he always called them, his "clever pets" (always attractive young women), whose business it was . . . But wait! Before her on a desk a file case with name and state licence number of every exceptionally wealthy automobile owner in America. Between her and the outside world a small lattice window through which she looked down on the street. And now, see, here comes an imposing car. It is stopping and a gentleman is stepping out. But not so quickly but that "clever pet" has time enough to run through the card index and find the name of the owner of the car as per the licence plate, and in some instances to examine his photograph. Was it he who approached? Then forthwith a house phone call to the doorman and to the floor manager. "William Ainsley Gay, of Denver, entering." And then the doorman to Mr. Gay: "Good morning, Mr. Gay. Pleased to see you in New York again." And then to the obsequious floorman already approaching: "Mr. William Ainsley Gay, of Denver." And the floorman welcoming Mr. Gay as only a floorman can. You may well surmise the oily value of such vivid thoughtfulness in regard to all who came in contact with Millerton, Ltd.

But now as to the storm. At the very height of Phil's fame, a sudden charge of customs robbery by no less a power than the Federal Government, via its port agents in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and elsewhere, backed by data prepared by the Federal Secret Service. Yet not before one Philip Millerton, not actually at the moment, but possibly later, to be involved in this maze of amazing charges, had had time to enlist the services of three of the shrewdest lawyers in the east and various political and social powers and aids. Yet for all that, in all of the great dailies an open charge to the effect that a ring of art dealers and agents, who in many of their

transactions appeared to be dealing ultimately with one Millerton, Ltd., had been swindling the United States Government to the extent of ten millions in undeclared values. And all this coupled with the threat of arrest aimed, no less, at this and that person, even at one Phil Millerton, unless quite all in connection with these duty frauds could be cleared up, the government reimbursed and its penalties for fraud satisfied.

And Millerton, therefore, one of the most absorbed and tense, if not outwardly troubled, of men I had seen in some time—kind but thoughtful as he was. For of course I saw a great deal of him and Al during these days, and I could feel the strain that was upon him. And obviously there was no way out of the situation other than (1) by restitution in part; (2) by shoving the blame on to agents and underlings, who in order to be made to accept this onerous load, would have to be protected from jail sentences and paid as well; and (3) via political, financial and social influences, sufficient to persuade the government not to point too directly, if at all, at Millerton himself.

But the work that was necessary for all this! A veritable phalanx of lawyers who stood four-square about Phil, and with demands for particulars and writs and stays of every type soon had the whole matter wire-hedged and barbed in Federal Courts while Phil's agents went about ameliorating the hearts of this and that person. In the long run, as far as I could gather, not a few of the articles thus slyly imported were acknowledged and the duties and fines paid—a total of something like two million dollars, if I recall right. Next, although Phil escaped any direct legal attack on himself as the principal and guide in all this criminality, still there was one necessary appearance before a Federal Grand Jury, during which he answered most easily, he said, all that was asked him.

But the publicity in connection with it! Enormous! And the blazing head-lines, so injurious, even by innuendo, to his standing as an impeccable dealer in art! And, a yet severer phase of the whole affair, the annoyance caused many of his wealthy patrons, who were compelled not only to see their names mentioned as buyers of the suspected objects but to receive government agents who were abroad tracing this and that in order to properly evaluate the same.

Lastly the money to be paid! First to his lawyers, whom

he secretly termed "damned jackals." Next to the government. Next to those lesser agents and assigns who had acted for him. And finally to various Wall Street bankers, friends of his on the surface, but whom in this crisis he was compelled to approach for loans and whom eventually he dubbed "blood-suckers." In short, and overnight, as it were—and despite a plethora of stocks and bonds and this and that—Phil Millerton finding himself, as both he and Al told me, in the hands of moneylenders. "And Heaven knows when he will ever be able to get free of them!" said Al.

The one thing that seemed eventually to have saved him was the fact that quite all of his creditors were fully aware that should he be broken and driven to the wall, there would be no cash for anyone. All would go to the government and debts would be the portion of many. Next, it was also clearly understood by all that in the matter of judging, importing and selling art, there was not his equal anywhere, and that if left with sufficient leeway, he would at last clear himself financially and so eventually benefit all who were involved with him. In consequence, after something like two years of wrangling and proceedings of all sorts, he was at last free, his own artistic master once more, but with notes at one, three and five years and totalling some five millions.

But in connection with all this, what curious developments! Among others a most interesting trick made public by the United States Customs Department, whereby diamonds, pearls, rare tapestries, famous paintings and what not were introduced duty free. But guess! So commonplace and unimpressive a thing as an old and not startlingly valuable chest or table, which, however, contained the most skilfully contrived secret drawers or a false bottom or top or sides—maybe all of these in one and the same chest—wherein there could be most carefully concealed not one but sometimes actually several of these all but priceless articles. Precious stones in particular and once a necklace, if I am not mistaken, and said to be worth \$375,000; another time a set of plate belonging to an Italian prince, divided into parts and introduced into America during the course of a year by means of several chests with secret pockets or false bottoms or tops.

But always when one of such treasure was *en route* or about



to be sent from Europe, a trick or fake letter addressed to Millerton, Ltd. (the idea Millerton's own, so it was said) and mailed a few days after the shipping of the chest containing the secreted object. And this letter quite regularly stating that by a most unfortunate oversight in the letter of instructions covering the particular chest shipped, the shipper had forgotten to state that in a secret drawer or bottom—always most carefully described in this letter—there had been placed a necklace, or a tapestry, or this or that of great value (and concerning which, and obviously, there had been much previous correspondence), but that now if Mr. Millerton would be so kind, he was to explain the oversight to the American customs authorities and there and then declare the true value of the same and pay whatever duty might be fixed, in order that no suggestion of fraud might appear to attach thereto. Of course, this letter was intended for use only in case the secret shipment chanced to be discovered, whereupon it could be produced as evidence that no fraud had been intended. Otherwise, no letter and no other word of any kind.

Notwithstanding all this, though, the general newspaper palaver concerning the American art ring that was swindling the government of its proper duties made no direct reference to Millerton as a guilty accomplice. Rather—and rather only—the government was “curious” as to this and that, but trusting and, more, believing that Mr. Millerton would be able to “explain” all—never a direct statement for instance that he was a thief or anything like that. Never. Not Philip Millerton, Ltd. In the first place it might have been much too difficult to prove. Millerton had been entirely too shrewd as well as busy since the first rumour and had almost succeeded in covering his tracks completely. None the less, a feeling that most definitely he had been or was connected with it; the feeling that, for a time at least, he was likely to be arrested, tried, convicted, and sent to prison. Yet in due course the whole thing blowing over without his being arrested but leaving him loaded with bills payable.

Yet even so, as I then and there noted, Phil was never the man to wince. Once in the very midst of this storm he said to me, and with that wry, ironic smile of his into the bargain: “Oh, notes! I have to pay, yes, but if I can, not otherwise.

And they can't get what I haven't got. I'll keep a little hay ahead of them and that'll keep 'em following."

And another time—and this the most human, yet to me the most painful and ironic feature of the whole affair—we were discussing his difficulties, over a highball—he said, *and to me*—"I wouldn't mind so much for myself, you know, but there are the kids, and particularly Joan. She's growing up to be such an attractive girl"—she was nine then—"and we've been grooming her for a race. But if this thing breaks wrong . . ." By his look I saw how much he cared for her—a child that wasn't his! "As for Braith," he added, "he's sixteen and pretty shrewd, and it wouldn't be much trouble to see him through college. Besides, if the worst does come, he'll know what's ahead of him."

I never so much as dreamed of reporting this conversation to Al, although she must have listened to many like it. But then, as I say, came better days, though never exactly the same as before this difficulty. For there was that social let down that had come with the storm. More, Phil as well as Al had been made into a very tired man and wife—very—so that there was never the same zest or enthusiasm, as I could plainly see. For now Millerton was not only working to pay off a mass of debts, but the things which had previously inspired him to such energy, such as prospective wealth, fame, etc., were by now an old story. By that I mean the great houses on Long Island and at Palm Beach, the showy and colourful contacts with those frittering and wealthy individuals who made up his sly commercial entourage were not so interesting. Besides, as anyone could see, he was getting along in years—in his middle forties now—and by the time he should have paid off his debts and re-established himself, he would be years older and would still have his fortune to make, if he wished then to have a fortune. To be sure, he had hidden away some stocks and cash, so that in case, as he said, he was incapacitated, financially or otherwise (I think for a time he must have contemplated a term in prison), Al and the children would not be entirely without means. But assume that it was two or three or four hundred thousand dollars. How little that would have counted as against the expensive and almost wasteful life they had enjoyed!

And yet by degrees the debts eventually liquidated, in part anyhow. And once more a large country place on Long Island, a season in a sublet property at Palm Beach. But both Al and Phil no longer so greatly interested. The enormous financial strain had told. And Al, of course, smarting because of the publicity that had been. For there was no denying that now she was looked on as the wife of a "sharper" or robber, one who for a time at least had been closely verging on failure. And all this after the immense financial and social expansion which had carried them to the door of, if not actually into society ! And yet now all this was definitely over. And no one knowing it so well as Phil and Al.

However, as I noted, Al remained as stoical as ever. I recall her saying to me once when the storm had somewhat abated : " Phil's no worse than any of the rest, and at least he's a fighter. Actually, I like him better than ever these days. He seems a little closer to me, more dependent. And I'm never going to be disloyal to him again." And she looked at me a little defiantly, I thought.

As for the children, she was most concerned about Joan. " She's so strong-willed and so attractive," she said, " and Phil is so devoted to her. Much more than he ever has been to me. It makes me half jealous at times." Joan was thirteen then, and it was Albertine's idea that she must be guarded until she was eighteen or twenty. More, at this very time she was preparing to pack her off to some severe school for several years. " With her father's temperament, you know," and she gave me one of her quizzical, half-resigned, half-laughing looks.

" How about her mother ? " I parried.

" Oh, don't you dare blame her on me, ever ! You know how she came to be here."

But then the ensuing years. Braith, fortunately, marrying a society girl, with some little money, and retiring to play the social game. And Joan eventually coming back from school in Switzerland and plunging into a round of social gaiety which finally ended in a complete break in health. For while dynamic and wildly enthusiastic, she was never strong. And wilful and with notions about freedom and her rights which were all too modern and eventually resulted in her running

away from home for a week, another time for three days, and each time succeeding in creating an intense and even terrifying home situation, with detectives called in, and Millerton contemplating some drastic way of circumventing her for a few years more—"until she can get a little more sense," as he phrased it. But no real victory as I can testify. Never in her case.

Rather I recall calling at the house one afternoon during this turmoil attending her return, and instead of finding her ashamed or humble, looking at me and actually trying to flirt with me. "Why don't you come and see *me* once in a while?" she asked, with a lingering look in her eyes.

"Never mind, Joan, I will," I replied. "But you'd better be a good girl, or I won't." I retired, a little shocked and beaten for once, you may be sure.

But beyond all that, the fateful, elapsing years. Phil getting a little fat and losing that quick, light, snappy insouciance and interest in what might be called smart dressing. And Al . . . Ah, the inroads of time! . . . growing stout, although fighting weight, but finally resignedly saying to me: "Oh, well, why fight? Phil don't mind. And I have books and my home and Joan to look after." For Joan, poor Joan, was by this time almost a hopeless invalid. Night clubs, escapades of all sorts, this, that.

"But you can't fight fate," Albertine once observed to me, calmly and philosophically. "What is to be, will be. Besides, I haven't suffered like some."

"And think of all you've done for others, Al. All the nieces and nephews and cousins you and Phil have got jobs for or married off well."

She sniffed. But later added: "Well, at least they can write one thing above my grave."

"What's that?" I asked.

"'She was good to her relatives.'"

"Will you let me add a line?"

"Well, what is it?"

"'She was good to me.'"

"Oh, you! You mean you were good to yourself!"

Which, after all, as I think of it now, I might announce as a fitting epitaph for me: HE WAS GOOD TO HIMSELF.



REGINA C—



## REGINA C-

**I**N the face of all the morality that is preached in the world I have been more than once sharply arrested mentally by those who are not moral, who are not even interested by such moral or balanced conduct as guides some others, religiously and ethically, who from the beginning give themselves over to conduct which flouts most of our accepted rules. And who fare how? What is their end? Is it true that unless one does thus and so, conducts himself according to the standard of give and take which prevails in the simpler walks of life, one does not fare so well as those who do so conform?

Regina C——, the figure of this sketch, never so conformed, in so far as I could gather. She remained indeed independent of all those binding emotions and tendernesses which hold most families and friends together. She was, according to one of her friends, the victim of an incurable passion, not so much for a man (who chanced, however, to be the nucleus of the same), as for a place. Read and consider. She was, and remains, a riddle to me. She may, and she may not, prove to be one to you.

The first time I saw her was at a party which by some might be considered loose, but was really nothing more than a genial "gab-fest" given one evening in the rooms of a young woman successful as a motion picture star. One small group was playing cards; another sat about a table and drank, or, tiring of that, adjourned to a larger room to dance to the music of the victrola or player-piano. There was much banter, jesting, laughter, all the silly arguments, slurs and quips that come under the heading of a good time.

But in the midst of it, about eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock, there swept into the room, with a refreshing dash, a girl who at once interested me. She was tall and dark, with a waxy-tan complexion, large, interesting, and, I should say, confused eyes. Long, loose capes were then the mode, and she was



wearing one, together with a hat that somehow suited the contour of her face and colouring. Anyone would have said on sight I think that she was modish, sophisticated, and probably clever. With an off-hand air of familiarity, she threw off her cape and hat, brushed back her hair with one sweep of her hand, and exclaimed: "Whoopee! I'm glad to be over here again, you bet!"

"Why the sudden haste, old top?" called one girl banteringly.

"You certainly blow in like a March wind, Regina. They don't close doors down where you come from, do they?" (She had left the hall door open.)

"Oh, shut up," was her response. "Give me a drink, will you? Gee, I wish you all knew how I got here. Didn't even have a notion of coming until four-thirty; then I threw some things into a bag and caught the five-thirty. But the way I did it! Didn't even pay my fare."

She went to the table and picked up a glass and filled it, dashed into another room with it to greet those who were playing cards, then returned to the centre room, where, seeing a man she knew, she suggested that they dance. Forthwith, they joined several others who were pirouetting about the room.

I asked a girl who sat near me about her, and was told that she was formerly a trained nurse, but now a superintendent of nurses in a private hospital in Washington. She knew little more than that about her. But as the evening wore on, and after all but a few who knew the new-comer very well had departed, Regina launched into a brisk account of how, having made up her mind to come to New York, and lacking the necessary cash at the moment, she had gone to the station in Washington with the deliberate intention of interesting some man—any man, apparently, only she did not put it quite so baldly—to pay her fare. Having found such a person, who no doubt fancied that she was entering upon an affair with him, she chatted amiably enough with him until they reached the station in New York, where she excused herself to visit the ladies' room. There she waited until she saw him gazing interestedly at a window display in the station, and then slipped out, bag in hand, coming straight to this place. "I hope I never run into him again," was her closing comment.

For a girl holding a responsible position, even though young and attractive, this struck me as a cool proceeding. For why such a gay, inconsequential superintendent of nurses? Was it by such that our hospitals were being run? Heaven guard the poor patients. I was puzzled, and a few days later asked a Miss Redmond whom I knew, and who had been pointed out as one of her friends, about her.

"Oh, Regina," she said indifferently. "It's a long story. My sister and I knew her in Washington. She seems a little crazy sometimes, but she's far from that. She's as shrewd and clever as can be. You wouldn't think she was a graduate chemist and bacteriologist, would you?"

"Well, not exactly. No."

"But she is. And up to last week she was superintendent of a small hospital in Washington. She's in love with a surgeon here, but they've quarrelled and I suppose she's over here to make it up."

"Yes . . . but how about her fare? Couldn't she pay that?"

"She could. Only that's her way. She preferred to make somebody else pay it—to play a trick on someone. That's Regina for you. She's the coldest and meanest of girls in some ways."

"And yet she appears to have charm."

"Lots of it. Only she doesn't really care for anybody. But I can't tell you now. It's too long a story."

And there the matter rested.

But for the life of me I could not get out of my mind the incident in the apartment, her appearance and that peculiarly cold, bald story, told with so much effrontery before others. They were all good friends, to be sure, but why such an open, indifferent, non-self-protective picture of herself and her ways?

Chancing a few weeks later to be visiting Miss Redmond, the door-bell rang and in walked, or rather rushed, this same Regina, dressed this time in sport clothes and looking very gay and spring-like. She and a certain Wally, the surgeon above mentioned, as she breathlessly explained, were out for a drive to some inn up the Hudson shore. Wouldn't we come along? It was so fine out, just the night for a drive. Come on! Again I noted the vigour and dash, an almost

irritating energy which seemed not to let her rest for a moment. Even as she talked she was here and there about the room, commenting on this, that, and other episodes with which both she and Miss Redmond seemed familiar. Only Miss Redmond was not in the mood for driving. Another night, possibly. Regina dashed out, and that was the end of that. Curious as to this latest development, and with the thought of the stranger who had been left at the station still fresh in my mind, I asked : " And is Wally the surgeon she came back to see ? "

" Uh-huh. He's having her reappointed superintendent of a hospital here. She was here once before, but left. They're always quarrelling, or she is. She treats him like a dog. I don't know why he stands it. But she's coming back now, or so she says, because they can't get along without her."

" Well, I can see how a surgeon might be interested in such a vigorous, dynamic girl."

" She is vigorous and dynamic, all right. She's a regular wild cat sometimes. But I don't like her so very much. She's too cold and hard. She only likes to play when she wants to. And she hasn't any sense of responsibility or honour. But that's her affair, and his." She relapsed into silence.

I was really interested by this strange girl, and by degrees wormed out of Marie the following bit of autobiography :

" I was living with my sister in Washington when I met Regina. You've seen how attractive she is. She was always well-dressed and carried herself with an inimitable air that must have been born in her. It could never have been acquired. Her education had never gone farther than a high school, but she used exquisite English always. She claimed to be from a very good Virginia family, and we always ragged her about being an F.F.V. Her father, according to hints from her, had been wild and treated her mother so badly that she had died of the conventional Southern broken heart when Regina was only a year or so old. The home was broken up and the children, two boys and two girls, put out among various relatives. Regina had no least family feeling, which I laid to her having been separated from her family for so long. Her sister was living in Washington with an aunt, but Regina paid no attention to her. She called her conventional

and dull, while she herself liked to dance until morning and sneak up or down hospital fire-escapes at 6 a.m. I don't know where the brothers were, and I doubt if she knew. The father was living in Newark, but he and Regina never exchanged visits or letters. She was entirely alone, and as soon as she finished her hospital training she rented a one-room-and-bath apartment and furnished it daintily with wicker furniture, intending to go on nursing cases in order to make her living. Like most Southerners, she loved work so well she could lie down and go to sleep beside it and never be troubled in the least. She never took a case as long as she had a dollar in her pocket.

"I met her when she had just taken her apartment and was stepping out into life. During her training she had fallen in love with a young surgeon connected with the hospital, but I don't think he cared very much for her. He was your typical ambitious medico, young and alive and determined not to be satisfied to follow in the path which the older men of his profession had blazed. Already he was doing big things, so he thought, in surgery, and the older men in his line were regarding him with a rather uneasy eye. Doctors and nurses of the hospital were not supposed to go together, and although Regina gloried in defying all rules, she seems to have observed this one—or he did—for except for glances and hand-holdings behind doors there was apparently nothing more than that between them then. For Regina at that time was many notches above the average girl in understanding, skill and a lot of things. She thought and dreamed on a higher plane, and it was not a pose, either. And here now was this young and promising doctor, who could, if he would, keep her supplied with work, and might even eventually marry her.

"Only the flirtation didn't work out in quite the way she expected. Instead of emotionally 'falling for her,' as she hoped, this very attractive surgeon laid siege in another way, and being repeatedly repulsed he finally left her in a rage, saying he would never return. This was the beginning of the end for Regina—her faith in romance. She stayed in the house day and night for weeks, waiting for her idol to call, sitting by the telephone, walking the floor, crying, raging, fuming—but to no avail. Her pride must have melted some

during this ordeal, for finally she called him up to tell him she couldn't live without him.

"If you had known Regina's pride you would realize that this was a bitter pill for her to swallow. Following this came an *affair* which lasted for a number of months—perhaps five or six, but not longer. The truth was that her surgeon was not really interested. He was lost in dreams of a career, which ended significantly enough for him, very poorly for her. So all at once she found herself discarded. That is, when she called him up at his office or home, he was not in. Then she took to walking slowly past his office, stopping to play with his dog, or to tie her shoe-strings, which somehow always came open just at his place. Also she even began to visit her old hospital in the hope of seeing him, but regularly he managed to avoid her. So far as I know, she never came in contact with him again, even in work.

"In sitting about though, waiting for him to call, she had, of course, turned away all cases offered her, and her living then depended entirely upon her earnings. So it was that soon she was being hounded for rent and payments on her furniture. My sister and I offered her shelter in our tiny apartment until she could get her affairs straightened out, but soon it became evident even to our friendly eyes that she had become all but indifferent to life. I think it was during this period that her views of life and of men changed and hardened. There was no least trace of her old air of brisk interest. She seemed to think that we had given her a haven of rest, but just the same I think she looked upon us as merely a passing convenience. About this time, that classic: 'You Made Me What I Am To-day, I Hope You're Satisfied,' came out, and we pooled our spare pennies together and bought the record. Regina would hang over it with wet eyes, thinking of her lost *love*."

We were interrupted at this point and the rest of the story I gathered at odd times. Pieced together, it went something like this:

The two Redmond girls were identified with a form of life which did not countenance the doldrums to any great extent. They were young adventurers, without background or means, as are so many of the thousands who reconnoitre the great

cities, and without many, if indeed any, severe or wholly unyielding moral scruples. After the brief hours of work in the government bureau with which they were connected, their evenings were devoted to entertainment. Being young and attractive, their place was a rendezvous for certain men of position, all intent upon trips to the theatre, card-playing, dancing, dining. It was not long before one of these men, a lobbyist of no little cunning and political notoriety, laid siege to Regina. Neither he nor any of these others was interested in marriage, or even in long-enduring relationships of any kind, but Regina, due to some conventional, or perverse (as such denizens of the middle world might see it) instinct, was interested, if not so much in one life-long love, at least in the complete absorption of one man at one time. So it was that because of some peculiar twist of this man's make-up, his attitude toward women in general, promises he made her, or some hope she had entertained in regard to him which had not been fulfilled, she was of a sudden moved to intense disgust with him. (She was probably undergoing the second great disillusionment of her life.) At any rate at this time she got hold of a revolver and sought to kill him. Having been warned by one of the sisters, he made good his escape, whereupon Regina, rather more than less dissatisfied with life, tried to turn the revolver upon herself. Fortunately or unfortunately as time was to prove, one of her friends interfered and the catastrophe was avoided. But she announced rather coldly that henceforth and for ever she was done with men. They should not use her. Instead, she would use them. They should see.

This last decision appears to have led to a material and possibly even mental betterment in her case—for a time, anyhow. For in seeking a way out she decided upon post-graduate courses in chemistry, physiology and bacteriology. And in order to achieve and creditably conclude in these she took herself in hand and did some nursing. Also, she wrote to her father, for whom she had no least respect, let alone love, it seems, and begged him for a loan. Much to her astonishment he provided her with a few hundred dollars. Then she came to New York, where she remained two years. When she reappeared in Washington and among her friends for a visit, it was as a post-graduate in her craft, and with

the position of superintendent of a small hospital in New York. This position had been secured by application and strictly on merit, and the man whose word carried the most weight was a young physician, Walter La Grange by name. He was the chief consulting physician, as well as the head operating surgeon of the hospital, which, incidentally, he had helped to found.

Because of my intimacy for a period of years with the various members of this group, I came to know La Grange fairly well. He was an interesting example of the cautious, practical medical man, who has had most of his illusions dispelled by his work, but still seeks to conform ethically to the tenets of his profession. He was fairly able, I take it—at least very keen to be identified with all that spelled advance and efficiency in his practice. More, he was pleasing in appearance, courteous, soft spoken—altogether a genial and pleasing type. At that time he lived with his mother and a sister and brother in an old-fashioned brownstone house in the region of Madison Avenue and the Eighties. He had his car, his club, and the various other appendages of those who feel that they are doing very well. But soon after his first meeting with Regina, this quiet tenor of his way was disordered. For, so he confessed to me, later he found himself wishing to be with Regina most of the time. She was, as he said, so brisk, colourful and dynamic—and medically really quite well informed, hence useful to him. Had she been of a different temperament I take it—less inclined to make men pay for the things that had been done to her—it is entirely possible that she and La Grange would have married. He was the marrying kind.

Not long after the day Regina came to take Miss Redmond for a drive I was casually inducted into an apartment shared by her and this La Grange. Or rather, while not actually a resident, he spent most of his spare daylight and evening hours there. It was a ground-floor suite in one of the few tree-shaded streets in upper Manhattan Island and near the hospital of which La Grange was the chief physician. More, it showed some little taste as to furnishings and ornament. Only and alas one could see that it was a playground of sorts for those who liked a good time. In spite of La Grange and a negro servant, who did this, that and the other all day long, it was

evident that housekeeping, and especially cleaning, was done spasmodically. Too often and especially in La Grange's absence the remains of quick and casual lunches, dinners, and midnight suppers were still about the day after. Friends of the type that prefer a helter-skelter, Bohemian atmosphere to any other were usually there or just leaving—people of the literary, artistic, and theatrical worlds. Here all sorts of amusing parties were staged. Perhaps too much liquor was consumed on occasion. Perhaps, on occasion, there were certain possibly dangerous tests of the effect of drugs. But without any desire to corrupt anyone or to engender a craving which could not be mastered. I thought there was too much talk of the ignorance or unsophistication of others. Too many people were "dubs," "boobs," "hoi polloi," "proletariat," and the like, to suit my taste. But what would you? Youth will be served. Few of these parties were ever attended by La Grange. He was too conservative as well as cautious, perhaps, and appeared to be a little shy of the social and moral admissions which attendance at affairs of this kind might imply. It is even possible, as I have often thought since, that he was not aware of most of them. And at any rate he was seldom to be found there.

But it is not to be assumed from this that Regina was either indifferent to or neglectful of her hospital duties or her affectional relations with La Grange, either. Rather, in regard to him, it was perhaps the dubious or uncertain nature of his general attitude toward her that caused Regina to suffer and take refuge in this form of social relief in order to prove to him that he was in no way master of her moods. At the same time, although it was long after she had left the hospital, that I heard this and after her relations with La Grange had become of a decidedly different character, it was said by all that she was the most efficient superintendent the hospital had ever had. Things moved with quiet and precision. If one dropped into her sanctum at almost any time, as with others I sometimes did, it was the usual thing to find her very much concerned with her affairs, bending over her desk, giving orders, disposing quickly and definitely of all sorts of small difficulties. The patient in No. 7 was not to be given anything but a little milk until to-morrow noon. B operating—



room was to be prepared at once, all instruments sterilized, Dr. O. to operate. No. 18 might as well be transferred to 6. So she would rattle on. If the visit included an invitation to some affair, and she was interested, she would call a nurse and say: "Miss X., I am going out. Will you take charge of the office? If Dr. K——'s patient arrives, he is to be put in 3. And 10 may have a hypodermic after three, but only in case she doesn't sleep. I will call up or be back by midnight." Then she would throw about her a long, loose blue cape and proceed to her apartment, where, if the occasion demanded, she would make a real toilet. I used to like to look at her as she swung along. She had the air of one who was enjoying life.

But in spite of all this efficiency and gaiety, I must say that I personally never quite liked her. She was too evasive, elusive, remote. More, she never seemed to share her confidences with any other. Rather, she preferred to live within herself. If one could trust the accounts of the Redmonds, she was really not a good friend to anyone, and in addition, and at bottom, there was something cynical and sinister, and at times even erratic, in all that she did. But in so far as La Grange was concerned, in her personal relations with him, she was said to be strictly loyal and faithful. Yet—and this in spite of her previous experiences, having been so foolish as to compromise herself with him, she was now bent upon winning him to marry her. This, no doubt, arose from the fact that she had begun to realize that she was growing older, that there was not too much to be said for youthful fire and high jinks, and that he constituted a very respectable and even enviable catch.

Be that as may, presently, or so I heard, she was leading him a dog's life. Among other things, she was becoming jealous and exacting. He could go neither here nor there in such hours as he was free without her knowing all about it, nor could he pay too much attention to his home life if it resulted in any neglect of her. Although this relationship was assumed to be entirely *sub rosa*, she was not above calling up his home and making inquiries and requests which were likely to prove embarrassing. Nevertheless, he continued to be fond of her, and she never had any real occasion to doubt

him. Still, he did not marry her. There were, so I heard, quarrels, brief separations, reunions—the usual rhythm of desire, frustration, opposition, compromise. Apparently each of us—certainly the most of us—as Nietzsche points out, seems to draw a certain kind of success or disaster, about as plants draw a certain kind of insect or a given type of tree the lightning. We have, or are, a fate in ourselves.

It was about this time though, that a new and troublesome element was introduced into Regina's life, and that by herself. She was beginning, so I was told, to experiment with morphine, not because she was depressed or overweighted by her uncertain relations with La Grange, but more because at heart she was mischievous or a true rake—one of those bent on breaking laws and troubling conventions for the fun of it. Very good—I am prepared to believe that. But there might well have been some other angle to this fact. At any rate I have never been satisfied that those who associated with Regina at the time really understood her. She was too complex, too daring, too different from those about her to be tabulated or pigeon-holed so readily.

Yet soon, at any rate, morphine had become a regular thing with her. Being superintendent of a hospital it was plentiful and within her reach. All she had to do was to take it. Worse, or so I was told, she began to grow lazy about her work and her clothes—to spend too much time in her apartment, asking as an offset that her assistants call her in case she were needed. By this time, also, and possibly because of La Grange's almost nightly absence, she had induced one of the Redmond girls to come and live with her, and it is from Marie Redmond that much of all I am about to relate is gleaned. For Marie it was who explained that in connection with all Regina's hospital employees and inferiors it was her custom to employ a high and mighty, if not coldly condescending, air. La Grange, as she pointed out, was her only superior, and he had sufficient authority to make her rule supreme. Just the same, soon after morphine had become necessary to her, she and La Grange had a quarrel (it was assumed by Marie afterward that they had discussed marriage and he had told her he did not want to marry yet), after which Regina proceeded to lock herself in her room, where she remained for a whole day,

brooding and injecting morphine into her veins. Returning that evening Marie, as she stated, found the bedroom door locked, whereupon letting herself in through an outside window she discovered Regina prone upon her bed, fully dressed, but in a state of coma, her face and hands of a greyish-brown colour. Suspecting morphine and suicide even, her first move was to call for La Grange, who came tearing as fast as his car would bring him. He saw at once what had happened and gave orders that a large pot of strong coffee be brewed, and then, with Marie's aid, as she said, he lifted Regina to her feet, and for sixteen hours these two, together or separately and by turns, walked or half dragged Regina to and fro, to and fro, until at last some faint signs of consciousness returned. Throughout this mishap, so Marie said, La Grange appeared to be the soul of affectionate distress. Once he gathered Regina into his arms and called to her, asking her why she had done this, assuring Marie it was all due to a misunderstanding, that he really loved Regina and she knew it. More, if she lived, things were to be made different and better for them. He was going to procure a leave of absence for her and together they would take a short vacation. And so they did after she recovered. Also, according to Marie, he appeared to assume that Regina's collapse was due to nothing more than the sudden and rash use of a drug with which she was unfamiliar. Altogether, the immediate effect was to make him more loving. Yet he did not marry her.

And it was then, so I was told, that the vice which later changed her so greatly fastened itself securely upon her. She began to use morphine in such quantities as to rapidly deteriorate a temperament that was apparently vigorous and ambitious. Thus, therefore, whenever she felt despondent or neglected—or so said Marie—she would go to her room and give herself over to the soothing lethargy induced by the drug. At such times a ring of the door-bell or the telephone meant nothing to her. Both were either disconnected or ignored, and it was assumed by all, even La Grange, that she was out. Apart from noting that she was more irritable than before her attempt at suicide, La Grange, so said Marie, appeared to think nothing of it. She was still reasonably active and competent in the prosecution of her duties, and to a certain extent interested in

pleasure. In fact, according to Marie, it was much over a year before La Grange began to guess that there was something radically wrong with Regina. Previous to that her noticeable periods of unusual gaiety and affection, punctuated by moods of peculiar indifference, appeared to deceive him. He did not appear to sense the grip that the drug already had on her. Always neat and rather proud of her appearance, it was only with the lapse of a year that she began to idle about her apartment, and even the hospital, in none too well-launders uniforms. Her hair, as I was told, no longer received the care which previously had been indicated by various tasteful arrangements of it.

But conjointly with all this would also come sudden changes of mood, during which she would develop an almost inordinate zeal for cleanliness—possibly an offset to her previously ill-balanced actions. At such times, though, she joined these cleanliness bursts with the privilege of calling up various smart Fifth Avenue shops and ordering many things sent for her inspection. With little regard for expense, either to herself or La Grange, she would then retain many of them, charging them either to herself or him, and soon, according to my confidant, her trunks and closets were actually stuffed with beautiful but useless things, which later she would give away or sell for little or nothing. Always liberal with her to the extent of his means, La Grange at first said nothing, but later certain of her purchases appearing to him to be too extravagant, he ventured to question her. Her answer was that he did not have to pay for anything if he did not wish to. A quarrel, followed by her disappearance for a few days, was the only result.

Later, however, resenting additional questioning by La Grange, and being still in the mood for these expenditures, she now proceeded to borrow from the hospital cash drawer. That is, changing some of the amounts received on different occasions, she pocketed the difference, trusting to her salary and the generosity of La Grange at the end of the month to be able to make up the abstracted amounts. And for a long time this she was able to do, a balancing and auditing of her books by the directors occurring but once every three months. In fact, I myself was once called upon to make a temporary

advance so that her books might balance, but in about ten days this was returned, she having possibly taken it from the cash drawer again.

Be that as it may, on one occasion she was not so able to make her balance without an immediate and large advance. Since La Grange was the only person from whom such a sum could be obtained quickly and easily, she was, perforce, compelled to appeal to him. Again, a protest from him, so I heard, and then in a fit of temper she defiantly told him that she had taken the money from the cash drawer. This was sufficient to horrify La Grange, whose feeling for economic and financial order was so great as to cause him to immediately replace the sum, though not without another appeal to Regina for reform. This so irritated her as to cause her without an explanatory word to resign her place and depart for Washington, where, taking quarters in a hotel and resorting to her favourite relief, morphine, a goodly amount of which she had filched from the hospital, she remained for days. Having had enough of being alone, she finally visited one of her group then in Washington, one, by the way, with whom La Grange had already been in communication in the hope of finding some trace of her. This girl, seeing Regina's gloomy and distraught condition, wired La Grange, whereupon he went to her. What promises, if any, were made on this occasion are not known, but she returned with him and with his help resumed her work at the hospital.

But, according to all, by this time she had lost interest in her work, and, to a certain extent, in La Grange even. He did not understand her, so Marie said she complained, once. Also that all men were fools or cowards or worse. At any rate by then life appeared to have lost its salt. She was apparently permanently depressed or indifferent and returned by degrees to her old foolish expenditures and petty defalcations. Yet, instead of indulging in parties as of yore, now she began to retire early and lie abed late. Hospital work no longer interested her, and she began to shirk it. When she did appear there, it was usually in a costume unpleasantly suggestive of one profoundly indifferent to appearances. She seemed to sleep at her desk ; at times, to be in a kind of stupor. Whispers and then complaints went around. And finally when an

inquiry was suggested by one of the other doctors, and La Grange mentioned it to her, she chose again to resign, this time for good. Thereafter, she took to her bed and announced that she was ill. La Grange endeavoured to make her confess to her habit, so that he might send her to a sanatorium, but she would not admit it and would not take the cure. It is perhaps at this time that his affection for her began to lose its original force. He was not seen at her apartment quite so much, although he still sought, in every way, to make her life as comfortable as before. As always, upon a word from her he would come and take her for a drive, to dinner, or to the theatre. But, in the main, as he later said, she appeared to wish to moon and drift, and he could do nothing with her.

And then occurred one of those encounters most calculated to arouse the jealousy of any woman. She once saw La Grange with another woman, either in a restaurant or a theatre, I cannot now recall. As it turned out, the girl was a young and attractive relative visiting his family, but the incident was sufficient to bring on a dark and disturbing scene. She called up his home and wanted to know (and from his sister, who chanced to answer the telephone) where and with whom he was. Miss La Grange had never heard of Regina, and was probably astonished at the wild and authoritative tone. At any rate, she asked who was inquiring, and why. Answer—Regina C——. Also that she had every right to know. The sister refused any information on the ground that she did not know anything about the person calling.

The effect of this was even more disturbing. The one thing that La Grange did not wish his family (his mother, especially, of whom he was very fond) to know was that he was conducting this clandestine affair. His mother, so he confessed to Marie, had always thought that when the time came he would marry a girl in his own world, in an open and socially conforming way. And had he ever married Regina it would have been in this manner, so as to place her on a level with himself. But now he chose to look upon this latest action of hers as a breach in that solid wall of respectability which must eventually surround her and him if they were to be married at all. When he called her the next morning to explain and protest, he found that she was already the worse

for the drug that he feared. She was in a half stupor, and when aroused was in no way repentant for what she had done. Rather, she deluged him with accusations of indifference and deception, which he could only deny, but she would not believe him. She asked him why she should care what his mother or family thought. What did they care for her? Let him give some thought to her condition socially and otherwise.

It was from this time that La Grange began to manifest an indifference toward her which most certainly hurried that despair which brought about the end. All reasonable bills were paid—rent, food, clothes. His car was at her command. Whenever she called for him he would come, but he did not call as frequently and as voluntarily as he had. Neither did he, or perhaps would he, understand how anyone could so completely lose hold of herself and life because of a disappointment in the matter of the affections. Perhaps he was not one who could grasp the depth and destroying force of some women's affections. Be that as it may, the result of this was that she resorted more and more to her principal resource against ennui and regret—morphine. According to her friends, she had taken a very large supply from the hospital and hidden it in a nearby safety vault. When this supply was gone, she sought to buy more, but just then as it chanced one of those periodic and sharp campaigns was being waged against all doctors and druggists who provided prescriptions too freely, and morphine was not easy to obtain. Yet Regina, being a vigorous and executive person, especially when pressed by any such need as this, now bestirred herself. By this time the drug seemed to have weakened or set at naught any inhibitive scruples that she might have possessed.

For instance, she bethought her that an ample supply was always to be found in the drug-room of her former hospital. Dressing herself in her best one day, she revisited that institution, explaining on her arrival that she had been away from the city for some time and naturally was very curious as to the condition of the old place and had come merely to look it over. Might she? She would just walk about without putting anybody to the trouble of showing her around. The superintendent, who knew at least something of her ability and former power, smiled blandly and turned her over to a nurse

to be shown about. But Regina, coming to the floor where the drug-room was, requested the nurse in attendance to get her something and in her absence hurried to the room. It was locked, to be sure, but she had retained a key. Opening the door she seized from the spot where it had always stood the bottle containing the hospital's supply, then closed it and returned to the office and her attendant and the new superintendent, to both of whom she later bade farewell. Later, learning from La Grange how the mysterious theft was discovered, and the lock on the drug-room door changed, she felt free to relate her ruse to Marie. Himself completely fooled, La Grange later also related this remarkable happening to Marie, not suspecting Regina until long afterwards, and then solely because she herself derisively related how easy it had been to hoodwink him and all.

But tricky and dangerous as this was (involving liability to arrest for theft), it was as nothing compared to other shifts which now followed. One of these related to La Grange himself. Like all doctors he was in the habit of carrying a hypodermic outfit in the inside pocket of his coat, but to get this case was her problem. Chemically trained, Regina knew that strychnia pills look almost like those of morphia; only a very careful examination of them side by side could reveal the difference. The thing to do then, when she needed morphine, was to induce La Grange to take off his coat, and then express a sudden wish for something in the kitchen. This challenge accepted, and the coat left, it was an easy matter to rifle the case of its phial and the phial of at least some of its pellets, the same replaced with strychnia so as to avoid detection. The fact that because of this exchange another's life might be endangered had come to mean nothing to Regina. Life! Bunk! What about her own life? Did anyone care for that? Assuming, though, that this ruse failed, as sometimes it did and there was another present whom she could interest, she would invite La Grange to show the unsophisticated third person the method by which patients were relieved of pain. If the case were produced and she could lay hands on the phial, so as to show the uninitiated how much she knew about such things, it was not difficult to uncork the bottle and spill two, or three, or four, on the



floor unnoticed, the same later to be gathered up. I am not troubling to add additional instances since these will suffice.

Just the same these tricks were said to have been worked by her at least a dozen times during the course of the second year. Naturally, since La Grange was not always at her disposal, these same had to be supplemented by others. One of these, as I now recall, related to a girl who had once come to the hospital over which Regina presided and had there been treated for the very habit of which she was now a victim. Suspecting that she had never been completely cured, Regina now sought her out. Her plan, as it proved, was to strike up an alliance with her by which both might come by the means of their mutual undoing. As fate would have it, this particular girl was open to, and even anxious for, just such an alliance. Between them then and therefore they hatched a workable plan. The girl was to go to bed pretending to be ill and a doctor sent for, Regina for the time being posing as a trained nurse employed by the patient. The doctor having arrived, a desperate case of gallstones was alleged. In the face of groans and much artistically simulated misery by the patient, it was not out of order for the nurse to suggest a hypodermic. But the doctor starting for the kitchenette to sterilize the needle and prepare the drug, Regina's plan was to come forward and with an ingratiating smile exclaim, in her best Southern manner: "Oh, no, doctor, yo' can't go in theah! The kitchen is too mussy. I wouldn't have you see it fo' worlds. Let me go. Ahm, ah, a trained nurse, yo' know, and can do it fo' yo'." A smile, a profound air of sincerity, and the doctor returned to the patient, whose condition became noticeably worse at the moment. In the kitchen the phial was rifled of its contents and strychnia substituted, an injection given the patient, and the doctor dismissed.

This was a mere preliminary to a long series of hoaxes. Together they remembered a nurse who was in attendance upon a number of rich patients who were addicted to the drug habit. It was assumed by them that she must have morphine in her possession, and upon her they now descended. Their call was in the guise of a social visit, and soon they were engaged in reminiscent patter. In the midst of this, though, Regina, who was really the active agent in all this, asked for

the privilege of rearranging her hair. Escorted to the only bedroom of her hostess and left there, her confederate resumed the interrupted talk. No sooner was the door closed though than Regina went through every piece of clothing, every box, bag, casket, drawer in the room and also searched the closet in a connecting bath-room. As a blind (the details are all Marie's, gathered from Regina or her friends at different times), she let down her hair and went about carrying a brush in one hand. But the search remaining unrewarded and her stay being unduly prolonged, the nurse was about to come to the door to see if there was anything her guest needed when a ring of the telephone bell interfered and she paused to attend to that. Thereupon the confederate hastened to warn Regina of the impending danger, and the following conversation is said to have taken place :

"For God's sake, come on ! I can't think of another thing to say ! And she's coming in here. She had already started when the telephone rang."

"Oh," plaintively from Regina, "I've looked everywhere and haven't been able to find a thing. But . . . but . . ." and this with an illumined gleam of the eye, "I haven't looked there," and she dived desperately toward an overlooked shoe-drawer at the bottom of a built-in wardrobe. This time she emerged triumphant, a full tube of morphine in her hand. She now proceeded to the mirror, volubly and loudly explaining how very difficult it was to do anything with her hair these days. In a moment she was in the other room, pattering about how grateful she was for this courtesy and what a charming and livable suite it was. In a few moments more both were bidding their hostess an affectionate farewell.

But even this was as nothing. A certain Mary K——, a Washington nurse who had known Regina there and was now living in New York, met her on the street and foolishly accepted an invitation to call. Instantly, Regina began a fictitious account of her own active practice, her many patients, and, what was more (the great European war being then in full swing), how many charity patients she had—wounded ex-soldiers—to whom she was giving as much of her time as possible. This Mary had once met one of the Redmond sisters, and Regina to further her plans in connection with

her now began a most moving account of the dreadful disaster that had befallen a brother of the Redmonds. He had come back from the war wounded about the face and stomach. Partial blindness and cancer of the stomach had followed. The cure of either ailment was out of the question. All that could possibly be done for the shambling, suffering, and disjointed soul was to give him morphine to relieve his intense and constant pain. As Regina told it death was a mere matter of months, at best. His sisters were devoted to him and were doing everything they could, but since that drug was now so scarce as well as expensive to come by, three or four injections a day being necessary, they were finding it an almost intolerable expense. She herself had given a great deal ; but was at a loss now as to where to get more. Perhaps she, Mary, would be glad to help. Wouldn't she ? Couldn't she ? If only she would !

Mary was of a sober and conscientious turn, not one given to trifling with the law or the ethics of her profession. Just how could she, was her thoughtful and dubious reply.

"Well," went on her newly-encountered friend, "you could get him some morphine, couldn't you ? I know it's against the rules, but in a case like this——"

The story sounded plausible enough. Beginning by protesting that she could not think of doing anything so unprofessional, she finally veered to where she agreed to supply a few pills at least, enough for a week's need. Fearing a change of heart, Regina accompanied her to her rooms in order to be sure of them.

This supply exhausted, though, there arose the question of how to obtain more. For by now Regina's unscrupulous daring had already frightened off her erstwhile confederate, and she was working alone. Yet even so, according to those who knew her, there was no source of supply that she was willing to relinquish this side of exposure and arrest. Being sorely pressed one night, not so very long after, she again called up that same Mary K—— and began a supplement to the preceding tale. First, of course, there was a long and grateful introduction concerning the good that had been accomplished by Mary's gift. The patient, while no better, of course, was suffering less, and his sister had been relieved of the dreadful expense of having a doctor in three or four times

a day, she (Regina) having taught her how to use the needle. But now the morphine was all gone and it was necessary that more be obtained. Regina herself had just been to see them and had given them all she had, enough for the day at least, but she could do no more. Would not this new benefactor come to the rescue once more? It would be a real charity.

This time, while generously sympathetic, Mary was more practical. She was not unwilling to go farther in this matter, but insisted upon seeing the patient. It was, as she explained, much too unethical to be handing out drugs unless one knew the conditions surrounding the patient. Couldn't she come and see Marie and her brother? For once the schemer was nonplussed, but only for a moment.

"Why, yes, of course, to be sure. Only, I forgot. Marie is taking him to the country in the morning for a few days. Some friends of mine are coming for him in their car. And his condition is very bad to-night. I don't think it would be advisable to disturb him."

"Maybe I could get around before they go," insisted Mary. "What time are they leaving in the morning?"

"Why, yes, that is possible. Only they are leaving at nine, and I didn't tell you where they are living now, did I?"—and she gave an address as far as possible from the region in which Mary dwelt.

It was rather difficult, and Mary gave over, seeing that insisting implied a doubt of her friend's veracity. She grudgingly gave her another week's supply, and then, feeling that she had awakened suspicion, Regina did not trouble her again. And it was not until Mary met Marie Redmond on the street a year later that the truth came out.

Next came a second offence against the ethical sense of La Grange which, as related to me by Marie who had it direct from Regina some weeks later, went as follows. Throughout all this period, as Marie explained to me, the relationship between Regina and La Grange had never been quite broken. He was still her good and best friend—sympathetic, tolerant, helpful. On occasions he saw her and, of course, was wholly unaware of her present quite desperate and wholly criminal course. From time to time during the period as well as before and all unknown to him, his morphine phial was rifled

and filled with strychnia. But there came a day once when for seventy-two hours, and for all her resourcefulness and artifice, Regina was unable to secure a "shot." La Grange therefore stood forth as her one resource. He must be persuaded to visit her and she must rob his phial. Driven by her great need she began calling him up one night after midnight, and at his home. Wouldn't he come to her? She was so very ill. Her standard complaint recently—nerves—was driving her insane. She must have something, a dose of morphine, to quiet her. "But, Regina," he is said to have answered reprovingly, "you know I won't do anything like that. Let me send you some chloral or somnal." "No, no, no!" she almost screamed. Unless something were done, and quickly, she would do something desperate—kill herself and have it over with.

This brought him, as Marie said, and at once. He found her in genuine distress, walking the floor, wringing her hands and begging for relief. Convinced at last of her need he took out his hypodermic case and proceeded to sterilize the needle by the aid of an alcohol flame. Suddenly she stopped in her walking and as if just then recalling something, exclaimed: "Oh, no, no! Wait, Walter! That . . . that isn't morphine. I forgot."

"Not morphine?" he inquired.

"No," she said. "It's strychnia."

He paused, puzzled, and then as though he were on the track of something, added:

"What makes you think it's strychnia?"

"Because one day here, not so long ago, when you went to the store for me I took out your case . . . just to look at it . . . and in fooling with it I spilled all the pills down the washstand there. And then I thought you might be angry, and so I put strychnia back in their place. I thought you might be angry . . ."

"So!" he replied, sitting down. "I see. You . . . you didn't use any of the morphine, by chance?"

"No, of course not. How can you say that to me? Of course, I didn't use any."

For answer La Grange sat there. This was the revelation he had long feared. The professional laxity, or dishonesty, or

ethical deterioration which had permitted such a development as this was too much for him. He was disgusted, and from then on did his best to separate himself from one whom he no longer considered ethically responsible. But on this occasion, because of the state she was in, he went and secured morphia and gave her a dose, at the same time making it plain that he would no longer favour her in that way. She must either submit to treatment and cure, if she was an addict (which she still denied), or she must look to others for her supply.

But if he was done with Regina she was not done with him, even though she realized that her hold upon him had withered to a dry and colourless claim. Due perhaps to the influence of the drug, she later declared to one of the Redmond sisters that she hated him and would see to it that he was punished for the way he was treating her. Had he not had the best of her love and devotion, and now see. Once about this time, according to Marie, she even outlined a plan by which she could take a deadly revenge if she but chose. She would have him drive her out to some lonely spot in the woods, or a park, where she would shoot herself with his revolver, which he kept in his car. Thus she would leave him to explain all. With no witnesses, his weapon, and with herself, the only one who could clear him, dead, she was sure that he would end in the electric chair! Another plan was to kill herself on his mother's doorstep, leaving a letter which would explain why she had done it. But these were the dreams of one lost in the fumes of a drug.

At that time, also, as it chanced, a goodly number of women with twisted lives, and some whose lives were not so twisted, were looking to the war and France to either regenerate or restore them, spiritually and in other ways, or to do for them entirely. Hundreds were setting forth on that adventure, so why not Regina? Besides, there was great public interest in as well as homely sympathy and generosity for those who were going abroad. Regina, sensing this, perhaps, lost no time in taking advantage of it. Visiting an old druggist from whom as superintendent of a hospital she had purchased many supplies, she explained to him how, now, she was going to France as a war nurse. It was her patriotic duty. But, alas, as she also explained, she was without funds.

The druggist, recalling her as an old and liberal customer and in his turn responding to the call of his country, grandiosely announced that she might take everything she needed and there would be no charge. Certainly he could do that much for his country if girls like Regina were going to help nurse the wounded. Thus encouraged, she at once proceeded to select the various things she might be supposed to need (but which were actually supplied by the government), only in the midst of her labours she suddenly stopped and came to the crux of her visit.

"Oh . . . ah . . . Doctor Kaye, I just now remember. I haven't any drugs, and I hear that they are very scarce over there. It would be a good idea if I took some with me. Could you . . . ah . . . let me have some . . ." and here followed a list of four or five things, winding up with : "and some morphine, too? I hear that there is a great shortage of that."

Mr. Kaye was a little disturbed. For regularly those days his place was visited by inspectors from various bureaux, city, state and national. The war on habit-forming drugs was growing very sharp. At once therefore he began to apologize, saying that he could not possibly give her any without a doctor's prescription, whereupon Regina at once assumed a very injured air. Was she not a trained nurse and until recently—before deciding to go to war—in charge of a hospital? How little he understood either her or her purpose or motives, and so proceeded toward the door. Whereupon the druggist weakened, defeated by her tactics, and so apologized, and proceeded to supply her with thirty grains, exacting in return, however, a promise from her to safeguard him in so far as the law was concerned. With this windfall she was at peace for another week or so.

Yet shortly after this she actually did embark for France, where she remained for some seven months. Whether she went as a nurse, or served as an efficient one or not was never truly learned. For the period of her service, though, it was necessary for her to assign to another her nurse's salary. Believing, as she did—or so Marie said—that she would never come back alive, she generously proceeded to make over this sum of thirty dollars a month to Marie as the one person who

had been most kind to her. (She had entirely cut herself off from her family and Marie was really her only friend.) Nothing was heard of her by Marie until some seven months later, when suddenly she reappeared, or rather wrote from a third-rate hotel in New York, where apparently she was lying ill. According to the story of Marie, who took her the accumulated cheques she had retained unused, she was living in a very shabby room, the blinds drawn throughout the day, herself wandering about in a soiled brown sweater and nightgown. By then much of her beauty was gone, and this loss was all the more emphasized by the indifference with which she regarded her person. Cigarette butts and ashes and burnt matches littered the floor and bed. A pack of well-thumbed cards, with which she played solitaire or told her fortune, lay upon a table.

According to Marie, who had it from Regina herself, she had already telephoned La Grange, who apart from one visit, during which he gave her some money, had not been sufficiently interested to renew the relationship. Rather, as she said, he had urged her to take treatment for her vice and undertake some active employment, but she had refused both suggestions since, as she said, "life was no longer worth it." Incidentally she had built up a large bill at the hotel, to the liquidation of which she refused to apply any of the money returned by Marie. The hotel didn't need it as much as she did. But being still in uniform and the sympathy of the stay-at-homes still at fever heat for those returning, she was not bothered. Subsequently she slipped away, leaving her trunk.

To this Marie added: "I saw that she was too far gone for me to help her. I had nothing myself, and the mere sight of her made me very unhappy, really terrified me. I had a feeling that I might in some way be taken with the virus of indifference and failure that was afflicting her, and so avoided her thereafter. It was really fear that kept me away. And still I could not help admiring her for some of the things she had accomplished in the past."

But this was not the end, either. From another quarter of the city, and quite some little time later she was again heard of, and in a rather dramatic way. Having at one time come in contact with a girl of rather loose morals who occupied a



small apartment in one of those poorly reputed buildings which adjoin the negro section of upper Manhattan Island, she had moved into this same building. Here, with nothing more than a suit-case, a pallet, and a store-box for bureau, she lived for a few months, preserving, however, her nurse's uniform and cap, which she found useful in her quest for morphine. All of her other former belongings, which had been placed in storage when she went abroad, had either been sold or lost for non-payment of dues. Just the same, she either could not or would not work, and seemed for the time being content to let La Grange go.

It was in this room, though, where she lay all day long with blinds drawn, that she concocted a new ruse. This was to array herself in her uniform and, satchel in hand, call at any hospital where either the doctors or nurses were known to her by name. Arriving at the office of the superintendent, she would announce that she had been retained as a private nurse for a patient, but then being brought or sent in by one of the doctors, both doctor and patient presumably being on the way. And might she be allowed to wait in the office, adjoining which was usually the drug-room? Quieted usually by her assured and confident manner, the superintendent and nurses would come and go without paying any attention to her. The moment the room in which she was chanced to be empty, though, she would dash into the drug-room, if it chanced to be open, and rifle it of whatever morphine it might contain. Immediately afterwards, whether successful or not, she would tell whosoever came into the room that she had changed her mind and would wait at the entrance for the doctor, and so, of course, make her escape.

But on one of these expeditions, as it turned out, and by a nurse who knew her to be a stranger, she was espied emerging from the drug-room. Before she could escape, she was stopped, interrogated, and then searched. At first—so the newspaper accounts ran, she indignantly denied taking any drugs, but the search yielding a goodly amount of morphine, she was detained, and then fell silent—made no comment of any kind. Of course, she was held and informed that unless she could bring forward friends who would vouch for her, she would be turned over to the police. Giving a fictitious

name and address, she now sent telegrams to various fictitious persons out of town, presumably in order to gain time. Pending response to these, she was placed in a second-floor room which looked out upon a stone court, and a nurse placed in charge of her. Here she remained from ten o'clock in the morning until late in the evening, no answer to any of her messages coming, of course. About dinner time, though, she pleaded faintness from hunger and asked that something be given her. Moved by sympathy, the nurse in charge of her went into the hall to call another nurse either to take charge of her patient or to bring the food, whereupon when she returned again it was just in time to see Regina's feet going over the window ledge. She was attempting to clear a wall which enclosed the court, and gave into an open lot some ten feet below which adjoined the hospital. And she would have cleared it and might have made good her escape had it not been that her dress caught on a hook outside the window. This threw her to the ground below, breaking both of her wrists and otherwise injuring her. Just the same, the police were notified and she was incarcerated in the detention ward of the hospital until she should be able to appear in court.

Meanwhile, the case attracting considerable newspaper publicity, photographs were published, and although a false name had been given, still Marie, La Grange and others knew who it was. Moved by her plight, La Grange investigated and sought to secure her release. By this time, however, she had been taken in hand by an emotional woman philanthropist conducting a home for erring girls on the East Side, and this woman, with the permission of the court, removed her to that institution, where she remained for some time. It was here that La Grange came to re-break and re-set her wrists, improperly set in the first place. Later he secured her discharge as cured, and later still La Grange and her woman philanthropist friend, testifying in her behalf, the case against her was dismissed. For some time thereafter, so it was said, La Grange contributed to her support. However, her mood toward life being by now hopeless, a craving for the drug soon returned, and she disappeared and was heard of only twice afterward.

On one of these occasions, so Marie Redmond said, she

came to her and announced that she was living in a basement room in one of the poorer sections of the city. To explain her emaciated appearance she said she had not been well, but now she was going to work. She was through with drugs and had just secured a nursing case in New Haven—some man, or agency, that knew of her nursing ability having recommended her to a patient there, but she lacked car-fare. Would Marie advance her the money? She would be met at the train and provided for thereafter, if only she could get the fare. This was given her, as well as a bag, a dress and a hat, because, as Marie said, the things she was wearing were unbelievably shabby. None the less, and so late as all this and after all her desperate life, Marie described her as standing before her mirror in her new finery, preening and twisting and turning to see how she looked. "I'm not so bad even now," was what Marie said she said, and later Marie added on her own account, and addressing me, of course, "She, who had had her evening dresses and her satin slippers, and who had walked with the air of one fully conscious of the attention she was certain to attract! And that in the face of the fact that the things in which she was studying herself were a mess—cast-off things which I was ashamed to offer, but which were all I had to give her at the time."

Four days later, though, she was again back and with another story. She had gone to New Haven, true enough, but on her arrival found no one to meet her. (She had not bothered to ask the name of the patient she was bound for.) Night was coming on and she had no money to return. What to do? Witness a flash of her old spirit and invention! She registered at an hotel, bathed, had dinner sent up, and after a good night's rest, her breakfast, for which she signed checks. After breakfast, restored by this excellent treatment, she wandered about the streets, endeavouring to think of some way out. Presto, a gentleman, of the type that always responds to intelligence and culture, to whom she explained her plight. And at once he gave her sufficient to meet her hotel bill, to pay her way back to New York, and to leave a balance sufficient for her to live on for a little while. In proof of which, if you please, she returned the loan and bag to Mary, and departed, returning in a few weeks to say that she had written

her new lover for aid and that he had sent her—believe it or not—two hundred dollars. Whether this was true or not, her personal appearance was considerably improved. She left, and was never again seen by Marie.

But once again after that even she heard of her, and in a most peculiar way. For it appears that La Grange, who had remained on terms of friendship with the Redmond sisters for some time after Regina and all connected with her had passed out of his life, one day called on or perhaps encountered one or the other of them, and on this occasion related how some time back his attention and charity had been called to the case of a girl in very great need of an operation, and with no money to pay for it, but by no less a person than Regina herself. For old sake's sake, as Marie said he phrased it, he promised to operate on the girl and ordered her to appear at a certain hospital. What was his astonishment when, going to the hospital and to the girl's room, he found Regina there, and in an immaculate uniform, and in charge of the case, or so she had told the superintendent. And now, owing to some freak or weakness of mind, she was pretending that the old affectional relationship between herself and La Grange still existed. He was her Wally, and she proceeded thus to address him, beaming upon him in a most loving manner. What to do? He could either face it out and as delicately as possible evade her, or he could have her ejected from the hospital, in which case it was possible that a scene and complications might have ensued. He chose, therefore, as he said, to humour her to some extent, making jests and evasive replies, but cautioning the patient and house nurse who had been assigned to the case to be on their guard against any proffers of service. She was finally removed from the case on the ground that he was going out of town and that another doctor who had nurse favourites of his own was to take charge. Before going he again gave her money, but he never saw her again.

That, in so far as I know, was the end of the story, except for the following, written me some two years later by Marie, to whom I had appealed :

"No, I have never heard anything more about Regina, and I don't believe that anybody else has. It might be that she recovered her sanity and poise and resumed some form of

normal life, but I doubt it. She was too far gone. A nurse whom we both knew told me only a few months ago that a girl descriptively answering to Regina had been picked up unconscious on the street and taken to Bellevue. When consciousness returned she proved to be raving mad and was transferred to Central Islip, a derelicts' asylum, I believe, where she died in a strait-jacket. I wrote there, but they informed me that no one answering to that description had either been brought or died there recently. Dr. La Grange also tells me that he has gone over all of the records at Bellevue and Central Islip, and that there is no proof that Regina was ever there. He seems to wish to believe that she is alive, but that may be because it would bother his conscience to believe her dead. Yet the Lord knows he did all he could for her—more than most men would have done.

"I should add that another girl has still more recently told me that she either saw or thought she saw Regina on the street here, and that she looked prosperous and happy. But I don't believe it. Some months ago another nurse said that she had had a letter from her in Denver, but nobody else ever saw the letter. Another is supposed to have seen her in Washington, looking very well. But I have never seen nor heard from her since she came to me two years ago, and I figure that if she were alive and well off she would scarcely hide away from everybody who knew her, and if she were alive and poor, she would certainly have appealed to me or some of the others who have known her. I was about the only one toward the last to whom she seemed to feel she could come without danger of criticism, but I have never heard a thing. My guess is, she's dead."

And so it may be. Personally I have always been inclined to think of her as a capable but erratic soul, one who had some queer twist in regard to the affections and who seemed to think that unless life could be bent to her mood it was not worth living, or at least not worth working for. Wherever she is, let us hope that the next scheme of things will be more to her taste.

But as for La Grange—well, he is still unmarried. He lives with his brother. His mother is dead, his sister married.

**R E L L A**

## FOREWORD

THIS story, innately truthful and self-revealing, was outlined to me one evening in Greenwich Village many years ago by an American poet who has since died ; and before him by his wife and the girl to whom he referred. Since no names appear, and his quondam fame, as well as name, has dimmed with time, there can be, to me, no conceivable reason why the sketchy transcript I made of it then should not now be enlarged upon according to the mood in which he related it to me.

THE AUTHOR

## R E L L A

“**W**HENEVER I think of Rella I think of a backwoods state such as Arkansas. Those round knobs and tumbled earthen breakers called the Ozarks ; the great fields of wheat and corn and oats amid which her young life was laid ; the tumbling, sparkling rill of a stream which ran diagonally across a corner of the large farm owned by her father ; and the fine upstanding trees and tumultuous spread of wild flowers all about. Great argosies of woolly clouds sailed the heavens in summer and gave rise to dreams of blue seas and white sails. From the fields came the whirr of the reaper, the call of many farmhands employed for the harvesting, the lowing of cattle and the bleat of sheep.

“ Her father, Samuel Howdershell, was a successful farmer as well as a politician of sorts. At least he had contrived to secure from the leaders of his party the position of United States marshal, which occupied but a small portion of his time. When he was not able to look after his farm in person, the shrewd and talkative little woman who was his wife, and who obviously liked the world in which she found herself, was there to do it for him. And she did it with a will and with skill, assisted by her two ruddy and vigorous sons, who seemed to look upon her as their guide and mentor. In winter they were away at school, as was the girl about whom I am writing.

“ But the air of smartness that went with their apparel in that far-away region—the something of city manners and city tastes ! Automobiles were few in those days, but each of the Howdershell children had a riding horse. And the large barn sheltered several polished conveyances as well as the farming machinery which equipped so large a farm ; also the immense crops of hay and corn which were reaped from the fields. Indeed, Howdershell had an office in the barn, in which he kept his papers and books, also a typewriter which either his wife or one of the children operated when necessary. Then



there were parties and regional affairs of considerable importance to which the ordinary run of native farmers and their folk were not invited but of which the family of a United States marshal was an integral and respected part. In short, these people moved in a busy, genial, sociable world, which at that far-from-happy period in my own life impressed me as particularly blessed and fortunate.

"I was married at the time—presumably happily married. And yet, the truth was that at thirty, and only two years married, I had begun to realize that for me marriage was a mistake. Either mine was not a temperament which lent itself to marriage, or I had erred in selecting the mate with whom it might have proved a success. Being young and far this side of an adequate conception of the mysteries of life and the harsh compulsions of society and the state, which invariably seek to preserve themselves at the expense of the individual, I was at a loss to understand my predicament. Perhaps I was suffering for my early ignorance and folly. But the laws of society were immutable, of course. Once married, always married. . . . 'Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' . . . These and similar decrees and ordinances and injunctions of our derived society haunted me like the voice of fate. From every tree and bush, to say nothing of the ordinary palaver of the home and the street, came voices to say that even the dark whisperings within me were wrong, very wrong ; and yet about me, gay with temptation, were youth and love at play. Who would take me by the hand and lead me forth from that slough of despond ? Whither—whither—from the great urge within that gave me no rest ? Those who know nothing of the love of beauty that walks hand in hand with passion will never understand. To them the mysteries remain the mysteries.

"However, being young, I could not but hope against hope. I had just had a play accepted and was writing poems and stories and getting them published—finding myself, as it were. My wife, as I could plainly see, was pluming herself on the fact that I had a future and that she was to share in it in an interesting way. But, as I often thought, she was entitled, certainly, to all the joy that life might bring her. On the other hand, here was this union which for me could

only end in beclouding my life, however much sunshine it might result in for her. Was I to work, work, work, and share all with one who could only be an annoyance and a weariness to me? And yet, this very thought, at that time, seemed to me the very substance of evil. Ought one not, rather, crucify oneself upon the cross of duty, charity, sympathy? Ought one not? I went about brooding over my lot, wondering almost hourly what was to become of me. And in so doing I could only marvel at this mystery of love. For here was a girl—my wife—as attractive physically as any of those about me—and yet, after two years and for, to me, some almost inexplicable reason, meaning less to me than almost any other. Her ways! I knew them all. Most of her moods and views, apart from her ultra-conventional ones, interested me, but she did not. And this was the same girl who only a year or two before had seemed to me to be the all-desirable. Let him explain who can!

“And yet, because of sympathy for her and self-condemnation for what I considered an unconscionable vagary in myself to which no well-constructed individual would think of giving way, I had in no way indicated my change of mood. And in so far as I could judge, she had no inkling of it. Yet, in spite of this, let anyone of her friends—women, the attractive ones, especially—conduct themselves in any but the most formal way about me, and she was off upon a lecture which concerned the compulsions and moral safeguards of the married state. Her chief social desire, apparently, was to know whether the men and women of her circle were morally, and hence socially, sound and pure. And however dull and uninteresting the sound ones might be, they were infinitely to be preferred to those who were not. At least they were good people. To the end of establishing this fact, therefore, she studied all and sundry, with a view to weeding out the unfit.

“And yet, when it came to the world at large, realizing that there were degrees of talent and that by some queer twist of life the morally unsatisfactory too often provided whatever flare and colour the visible social scene might have, she was inclined to study the successful and the beautiful, unmoral or what you will, and from them to copy such nuances of style and manner, and thought, even—where it did not conflict

with her own convictions—as would serve to heighten her own charm. And by the same token, those who were decidedly moral, but at the same time not smart and not so well-placed socially or financially as some others, were not, apart from certain safe contacts she was inclined to court, likely to attract her interest. This self-protective cleverness, however admirable it might appear to some, did little more than puzzle and at times irritate me. Her idea, as I was beginning to see—or thought I was—was to strengthen herself by such arts as these evil ones might suggest without at the same time contaminating herself or her blissful married state.

“But all the while I was miserably restless and unhappy, and daily becoming more so, constantly contemplating in my mind’s eye what I considered to be the happier love states of others. And envying them their bliss. Oh, youth, youth, youth! Beauty! The scorching lure of it! Without the favour of some gloriously beautiful girl, as I reasoned, I might as well be dead! But at the same time I was convinced that being married, no woman, young or old, good, bad or indifferent, would have anything to do with me! Least of all one such as at this time could have filled the frame of my fancy. Had I been more assured—less convinced of my own conclusion—some rather obvious indications or proofs to the contrary might have swayed me—but I was not.

“It was June of a lovely summer that found us visiting my wife’s relatives in D—, a town situated in one of those great states which adjoin Arkansas and the region pictured. Previous to this I had met nearly all my wife’s people, and had liked them—as I still do. They were a pleasant, home-loving, if very conventional, company, all rather respected for their honesty, industry, and all those other admirable virtues which constitute in society its most sustaining and binding threads. Nearly all of them were well-to-do, interested in trade, banking, or farming, and all intensely interested in each other, at least to the extent of wishing to see that none fell below the ideals or standards of the group or class to which all belonged. As for ourselves, we were welcomed as peculiarly worthy examples of the social code they represented and the success for which they all strove.

“The region in which they lived was not unappealing to

me, even at first glance, although it was of that dead levelness that characterizes so much of the land west and east of the Mississippi. At longish intervals were those small greyish-white, humdrum, wooden towns, with their Main Street, their one or two church steeples, their few stores, and their straggly and not too often tree-shaded residence streets so characteristic of the then only partially formed America. The town, a part of which they were, numbered about fifteen hundred people, all of the same workaday, small-town type. The particular house which my wife's parents occupied was a simple, low, eight- or ten-room affair, standing at the extreme end of a street, the last house but one. (This other home, by the way, was occupied by another son-in-law, of some prominence in the local political world.) No pretence of show or luxury was here. The automobile had already arrived in some places, to be sure, but not here. In its stead were horses, buggies, wagons and the dreadful dirt roads that went with them. Cows, pigs, chickens, and geese were the usual equipment of all sturdy homes, even the most successful. To west and east and south stretched the level prairie with here and there a house, or a tree, or a barn, but mainly a flat, unobstructed, sun-baked world. Behold the fields! They were either deep and green with swaying, rustling corn, or faintly yellowing with wheat. Such trees as there were stood out ragged and lorn against a wealth of sky. A single-track railroad carried the trains of a great trunk line, but few of the trains stopped here. Farmers and strangers trailed in and out of town in buggies, wagons, or on horseback, always offering a genial 'Howdy?'

"I confess that in this seemly world—being an aspirant at letters, not trade—I at first felt a little out of place. Later, due to my real liking for these people, I felt much at home. Perhaps because I offered a sharp contrast to most of the other sons-in-law—being a writer, or 'artist,' maybe—a somewhat mysterious being, in short, who could afford, for some strange reason, to loaf or walk or sit before a desk at his ease and scribble upon paper with a pen—I was rather looked up to and made much of. Then, too, ordinarily I—weekday in and out—dressed in what here passed for Sunday and holiday best, whereas quite all these others—banker, grocer, politician, minister—

wore during the weekdays, at least, less carefully designed, albeit more picturesque and durable, garments. (And they possessed more material wealth than I at that time ever hoped to have ! ) So for weeks, or the length of our stay, there was a kind of holiday atmosphere among these saine. We were different—hence interesting. Other sons and daughters, married and unmarried, came and went. They were a teasing, amusing lot, full of the silly quips and jests of the country-side and most loyal and affectionate where others of their group were concerned. And yet it was easy to see that their envies and rivalries underneath were in some cases very keen. They interested me as types, and I made common lot with them, giving and taking with their humours as best I might.

“ My object during this holiday season was to write, and this I did when the holiday-making would permit. After a few days I was quite in love with the country—its broad, hot fields, the silent streets, the long, dusty roads, the farmers and the citizens and their simple, homely ways. Near at hand was a graveyard, with a record of some sixty years of village life, and here I studied the tombstones. A mile or two away a creek trailed along between muddy, tree-shaded banks, and here I sat and fished. Over the way was the winter home of a well-to-do farmer and cattleman, a close neighbour of this family, which had been turned over to my parents-in-law for the summer. It was in this house, in a large, cool, and stiff ‘ parlour ’ such as most farm-houses boast, that I had my work-table and books and papers.

“ However, in spite of a long procession of golden, sunshiny days, with bees that hummed, cows that tinkled distant bells, flower scents, bird calls and flashes, trains that whistled mournfully in the distance, I was unhappy. There was a void which no beauty of life, no social efforts to please or entertain, could quite fill. By day, by night, under the clear stars, I dreamed of love and beauty, and wished. For only see, see, life, the love-time, all beauty, was slipping away ! My best years ! And these people, however much I might like them, were still small-town souls, and would remain so. No fault of theirs. They could not think the thoughts I was thinking or gather the import of my dreams. The church, as I could see, meant everything to them spiritually. It eased the lacks of their

lives in this world by promising them bliss in the next. Of books there were none, pictures none, music none, aspirations . . . well, here and there, perhaps, an aspiring soul, but . . . In consequence, between reading Keats, Shelley, Hardy, Omar, and watching the procession of the days, I was by turns sad and gay. My wife, of course, offered me at least mental or spiritual companionship, but I was tired of her, preferring to be alone and work, or read, or walk and think.

"And then one day, to greet the new 'in-law' and to see what he was like, of course—came an additional brother-in-law, whom, as yet, I had not seen, that same aforementioned Howdershell, with wife and daughter, the latter a girl between seventeen and eighteen years of age and as pink and laughing and vivacious as one would wish to see. How truly simple and lovely youth can be at times—shapely, graceful, rhythmic, ruddy, with—in her case—a wealth of corn-coloured hair, large, melting, grey-blue eyes, and small hands and feet. In short, on first glance and with a romantic and emotional ache because of my lorn state, I decided that she was exactly the type of physical loveliness of which I had been dreaming. Yet with no least knowledge of life or books, as anyone could see; on the contrary, as she conveyed to me, at least—a gaiety of spirit based on inexperience and illusion. Those innocent, non-coquettish smiles! That ringing laugh! That almost deranging sense of health in abundance! Those quick, easy, graceful movements! 'Heavens!' I fairly gasped, 'how utterly delicious and natural.' For there was about her an innocent pertness, without a trace of brassy sophistication, that held me spellbound. Indeed, as I said to myself and at once, here was the natural geniality of one who knows all too little of life and assumes the world to be rather better than it is.

"But her father! That tall, lank, weather-indurated soul! Positively, he looked to have the tensile strength of whipcord and the ignorance of ten. He was lynx-eyed, self-opinionated, recessive, and suspicious, as becomes a United States marshal, I presume. Thus far in his career, as I now learned, he had captured one or two criminals of serious import, and, if I recall aright, had 'justifiably' slain two. Vain, courageous, opinionated, and yet reserved of speech, he stalked about in a

long-tailed frock coat, his head adorned with one of those wide-brimmed sombreros so treasured of all American rurals—his hips carrying a pistol or two, I am sure. Yet, among relatives and friends he was the soul of geniality and, no doubt, clannish affection. Woe to anyone who should chance to injure any of his, I thought, and worse, had a feeling that a Kentucky feudist would have done no more. His wife, as I have said, was small, talkative, cricket-like, and bounced here and there in a jumpy way. She was constantly relating anecdotes and incidents portraying the humours and eccentricities of her husband and others of this rural world. They lived, as I now learned, twenty-five miles to the south of this, in Arkansas and in a region of hills and picturesque river scenes, very different from this flat world in which we were.

“But it was this girl Rella who alone of all these now held my attention. Once having seen her I could scarcely turn my eyes from her as she moved here and there, running errands to the store or from one to another of her relatives, and finally, and gaily, setting the evening table for her grandmother. Truly, I thought, here is one who is startlingly beautiful. And so unusual—and so wholly uninformed. And yet the pull of her for me—the beauty, beauty, beauty of her! And to complete my enslavement, I was at once identified by her, and in the most innocent and affectionate of manners, as one of the family. For forthwith she addressed me as Uncle Dan, and apparently listed me among those most fortunate males of this family who were to be looked after by her and all of the women. Oh, what beauty, I thought! What eyes! What lips! What hair! How trim and lissom a figure! Indeed, observing her now, I proceeded to meditate upon how two such homely persons as her parents could possibly have produced such a paragon!

“But, as always in those days, I decided forthwith that she was not for me, and prepared in a dreary way to make the best of it. Incidentally, I was conscious of the eyes of my wife, watchful and jealous. No least show of interest on my part, however innocent, could escape her, as I knew, and it would at once be interpreted as evidence of potential, if not plotted, unfaithfulness. Her manner at such times was most disturbing to me, and fiercely and instantly now I resented this

espionage. To be sure, from her point of view she was right, or at least within her rights, in trying to defend her interests or forfend against a destructive affection of any kind. But what about myself? My dreams? And to preserve this present and only seeming stability of our relationship required a great deal more than watchfulness, I thought—a reflection which made me sad. That love should fade! That one's happiness should end! Anyone's! And only love, as I knew, could preserve one's dreams. Not self-interest. I registered a sorrowful, and yet useless, sympathy for her. For of what value is sympathy to one who has no power to compel a real affection?

"The first night passed, and by morning I was doubly conscious of an irritated mood in regard to all this—my marriage, my contracted and controlled actions and, so, life itself. God! To be cribbed, cabined, confined! Why had I so early in life handicapped myself in the race for happiness? What a fool, to tie myself down in this way! Would I never be free again! Here was this laughing, happy, beautiful creature who but for this early mistake might now be mine. But . . . was I sure of that? Could she be made to care for me? No, no, no! Married or unmarried, how should I . . . being as unattractive as I was . . . attract her? Nevertheless, it was some satisfaction to me to find that after the first day she was still here. She had not flown, and love or no love, I would still have the delight of looking at her. And to my intense delight, on the second day I discovered that they were to remain a week.

"Yet that very morning, just the same, I went sorrowfully to my desk, thinking that it were best, perhaps, if I were to shut myself away from all this. I could not ever have her, anyhow—so why brood? Yet that afternoon, idling because idleness seemed in the air, I sat in a hammock and watched this girl and her cousin, the daughter of the politician over the way, race about, mock quarrelling over the possession of a trinket. Later, because of a friendly laugh from me, they came to the hammock and sat with me, each taking an arm and proceeding to examine the book I had been reading. But this proving of no interest, they soon turned to the playful labour of swinging me in spite of a pretended wish on my part



not to be swung. But by this time the mere proximity of this girl was proving toxic. I was made faint, as well as hungry, by the fullness of her beauty. A feeling of languor alternated with one of intense depression over the brevity of so great a joy as well as the inadequacy of any act or qualification of mine to interest such beauty, youth, innocence. A deadly drug could not have acted with greater power. In vain I told myself that if by so much as a look I should betray even a trace of what I was feeling I would be thereafter most carefully avoided, not only by herself but by her relatives. . . . In vain ! I could not help yearning over her. And how intensely. And yet, also—for the nonce, at least—I played the tolerant young uncle, fourteen years her senior and very circumspect and emotionally if not amusedly unconcerned. She was not for me ! Not for me. And then, heartsick because of the seeming remoteness of this youthful world which never again could know me as a citizen, I was ready to give over and return to my writing-room over the way.

“Yet now—miracle of miracles !—it seemed to me that she was more than ordinarily playful, springing into the hammock with me and once there attempting to push me out or upset me. And the feel of her arms, body—her glorious young strength tugging at me ! And later she took my book from me and began to read in a mock solemn voice, her pretty head pushed close to mine. But when of a sudden, as I also noted, she saw my wife approaching, she straightened and assumed a more distant air. Now, thought I, what does that mean ?

“That same afternoon I, having gone back to my desk and returned, one of my cousins-in-law volunteering to root plantain weeds out of the lawn with a dibble, I joined her, working with a table knife and fork for want of anything better. And the day being so fine, my thoughts soon wandered off to her whom above all earthly things I now so suddenly craved. How magical now the sunlight on the grass—the shade of the trees in the sunlight and this simple door-yard and lawn ! Had I not seen her tripping over it but an hour before ? Four trees spaced evenly beyond the street walk threw a grateful shade. If one could sit here with her ! But the hammock was now occupied by the marshal, who proceeded to make sport of us workers.

“ ‘Better come down to my farm,’ he jibed. ‘We’ve got lots nicer weeds down there.’

“ ‘Let’s see the weeds !’ I called hopefully.

“ ‘Dare you to come down and even look at ‘em,’ he returned mockingly.

“ I was tempted to accept, but just then the paragon herself appeared, returning from the village post office with letters. And quickly, laughing over the great work, finding a fork and joining us. She had donned a slate-blue apron, which caused her yellow hair to take on an added lustre. Seating herself nearby, she too dug and jested.

“ ‘Oh, here’s one with a whopper of a root ! I’m afraid I’ll never be able to get this one out without help !’

“Needless to say, I went to her aid.

“ And then, because of her gay spirits, I had an intense longing to play with her. To further this desire I suggested a game of mumblety-peg, and she agreed, asserting at the same time that she could beat me or anyone any day. A pocket-knife was produced, and we sat on the grass facing each other. Her gestures seemed to take on an innocent artfulness. She cocked her head, parted her lips in an interested and expectant manner before each throw, and pouted so demurely when she failed. I could scarcely play for watching her. The wisps of damp hair about her forehead ! The mock intenseness of her eyes ! The sweet rhythmic value of her gestures ! Once, as she was holding the knife to her chin preparatory to tossing it, she looked straight into my eyes. My senses reeled. That dreamy, tremulous glance—that far-away something that was like an inner sea of blue dotted with romancing sails—what could it mean ? Then she spoke softly, almost in a whisper : ‘I’ll miss if you look at me like that.’

“ ‘Miss, then.’

“ I continued to gaze, confused by her brazen coquetry and my limitations in the field of gallantry and courage and charm. Another relative, unconscious of this *tête-à-tête*, joining us, we made it a three and later a four-handed game. Soon after I retired to brood over the meaning of her words and the splendour of her beauty. For hours I could do nothing but sit and dream of her, confused and all but numb with

joy. I could not, and would not, believe that she was becoming interested in me. That could not be. And yet . . . that playful and yet seeking look ; that excited and enticing laugh when we were alone. I went to my desk in the house across the street, dubious of the import of it all and yet tremulously elate. Just before six, to my immense surprise and delight, she came, bearing a bowl of nasturtiums and a pitcher of water, which she handed through the window before my desk.

“ ‘Aunt V—— said I might bring these,’ and with this came a warm friendly glance. And : ‘You must begin to get ready for dinner now. I’m making biscuit. Do you like biscuit ?’

“ ‘If you’re making them, I’ll like them,’ I said, moved beyond the meaning of my words by her charm and the joyous manner in which she did everything. ‘But how well you do your hair !’ I added, for want of another thought.

“ ‘Oh, if you tell me things like that, I’ll make you lots of nice things !’

“ ‘You are all the nice things. You needn’t make me anything. May I tell you that ?’ I looked at her pleadingly.

“She began to move away, but without any suggestion of fear or reproach—rather as though it were quite all right, only not best for her to answer. I sensed her wisdom and said no more. But as she crossed the yellow, dusty road, still warm though the cool of the evening was at hand, I studied her. Her figure suggested that of one who might dance divinely. I was beside myself with delight. Could it really be that there was springing up between myself and this girl, my aged self and this bud, an understanding which, were I but free, could profit me so gloriously ?

“But as I was thinking, my wife came to fetch me, and behold—weariness of soul ! What could be the end of this ? How could there be anything other than a hopeless, fruitless infatuation, ending in negation and enforced regulation ? None the less, I was caught in the grip of an affection that was tumbling me pell-mell whithersoever it would. And all about me the warmth of this wonderful summer—a land bucolic and fecund. That great red ball in the west that was only now sinking beneath the level of the grass there. And this air, heavy with odours, floral and moving. The

lowing of cattle only a little distance away. The twittering evensong of birds. The spreading shadows, soon to be begemmed with stars . . . I stood in a side door facing the west and sighed over my lot, viewing this painter's dream before me.

"The next morning, on pretext of bringing me a pitcher of water and more flowers—services which I could not understand my wife permitting—Rella came inside the room where I worked. She stood beside my chair and looked over my shoulder at a half-written page.

"‘Oh, what a small, straight hand! You almost write backwards, don't you? You ought to see my scrawl!’ She was leaning over me, her face near mine—her cheek. And giggling infectiously. She affected me like fire.

"‘No flattery, now!’ I half choked. ‘I write badly, and I know it. But let me see how you do. I'll bet you write beautifully.’

"‘Oh, gee!’ (A gurgle.) ‘I used to get such scoldings at school. Once my teacher hit me over the knuckles with her ruler. And she always said my I's looked like J's. See!’

"‘They look like stars now,’ I said. I was looking into them as I said this. More, I had placed an arm about her and was holding her, which caused her to flush and exclaim, ‘Oh!’ All at once I drew her to me, bringing her yellow hair close to my mouth. I put a hand to her chin and pulled her face close to mine. There was colour in her cheeks, a weak, yielding look in her eyes. Our lips met. Suddenly she straightened up.

"‘I'd better be going now,’ she said, a little flustered.

"‘No, I have you now.’

"‘I must! I can't stay.’

"She permitted me to kiss her again. Her lips flamed against mine. I let her go and she ran out, stopping to lean over a bed of nasturtiums in order to recover herself. I sat and meditated. Could only a dreary separation be the end of this? For three days more we met in hall-ways and corners, among flower-bushes and trees, and in the old house across the way when an errand could be contrived. Once she said: ‘Would you like me to come to New York when I've finished school?’

“‘Would I!’ was all I could say. She danced away, adding as she went : ‘ Maybe I will, if I can.’ A wild dream anent the possibilities of this filled my mind for days.

“By some irony of chance at this time, her father now began to display a sudden and affectionate interest in me. He began to linger in my presence, discussing the area in which he was an officer, the politics and social friendships and biases which governed the execution of his orders. Like so many others at that time, he was curious as to the charm of New York and desirous of visiting there. Agreeably I asked him to visit us, and thereafter nothing would do but that we must visit him at his ranch, some twenty-five miles distant. He would rig up a working chamber for me in the house or the barn. If I liked, I could work in an old sheep-shearer’s hut on a hill not far from the house, and one of the children could see that I was called in time for dinner, or would bring it to me there. (Rella, said my mind.) More, we could return with them now. Later he would send one of his sons over for our trunks. I might stay the winter and see the character of life in the Ozarks.

“Where but an hour before I was facing pitch gloom at the thought of certain and impending separation, I was now at once beside myself with happy anticipation. But, in order to misdirect suspicion, I pretended to doubt the wisdom of imposing upon such liberality. It was too kind of him. It could not be. I really could not. But this merely sharpened his insistence, as I hoped it would. And to make doubly sure that I should be swayed, he set about coaxing my wife, who, to my surprise and delight, was rather in favour of the journey. So, she had noticed nothing, I decided. And at last and to my sardonic pleasure it was she who persuaded me to go.

“At dusk then one evening a day or two later, we set forth to drive the twenty-five miles. It has been a number of years now, but to this hour I can scent the odour of grasses and blooms and vines and bushes, wet with the dews of night. Through rocky valleys and along clear streams, which rippled and murmured over pebbly beds, the light three-seated vehicle, drawn by two spirited mares, rolled and careened. On either hand immense fields of corn and wheat and hay new-mown glinted dimly and spectrally under a full moon. Here and

there bats and owls winged their lumbering ways, and beetles in full flight bumbled and thumped against us. In distant cottages winked yellow lights, and overhead was the bright moon, all but blotting out the stars. Because Mrs. Howdershell wished to talk about New York and my work there, I was squeezed in between her and Rella. I recall my joy now when a furtive little hand was laid in mine under the blanket. The exchange of glances in the moonlight ! Her gay laughter and comments ! The shine of the moonlight in her eyes !

“Life at moments verges upon sheer magic. The astonishing impulse to generation and decay which we call living so richly orchestrates itself at times, so sensitively responds to exterior tones, odours, shadows, as to achieve witchery. The blending is so moving. So profoundly we dream ; so eagerly we seek.

“It seemed to me, as we rode at first between level fields, then over low hills, and through dreamy, misty valleys, that life, try as it might, could never attain anything more wonderful than this. Indeed, so intense was my mood, so great was the pull between myself and this girl, that I was all but translated to a less tangible realm, where life seemed to be dream rather than a reality. And yet, sadly, too—oh, how sadly and mournfully—I speculated as to whether anything permanent could come of this. How might I seize her ? How, in all her bright beauty, keep her ? Strangely, and without immediate cause, I was jealous of everyone—her parents and the future. Should I win her, or might not some other take her from me ? The bitterness of that ! I was riddled with pain by speculations as to loss, not victory. My wife ! My wife ! Married, married ! The words were as the notes of a tolled bell. And yet, in truth, I was not interested (even in her case) in a long-enduring marriage or the usual formal procedures in relation to love. Had I not secured this girl who was my wife, and did I now desire her permanently ? But why not ? Darkly I speculated as to why love should necessarily pass into this more formalistic and irksome relationship, only later to end in death. I questioned (and reasonably enough, I think) whether all women wished to be married permanently. It seemed to me that many—the more beautiful ones, at least—scorned marriage. Yet I personally was at

a loss as to how to provide a saner method of procedure. Tragedy or dissatisfaction or ennui seemed to lurk at every corner and down every path ; danger, death, and extremes of all kinds to provide the very necessary fillip whereby love found its zest and continuance.

“ At the same time, the attitude of this girl puzzled me. For her parents, strict and dogmatic people both, had, no doubt, emphasized to her all the social virtues as they understood them. And yet here she was now, playing at love with one whom she knew to be married. My wife, her aunt, before her in the seat beside Howdershell—and so jealous and suspicious, as Rella already sensed, I was sure. But did that in any way affect her ? It did not. Could youth, strongly shaken by life’s primal and driving impulse, be so affected ? I knew well it could not. All the solemn lessons inculcated thus far were plainly as nothing to her. She too was in love. The misery which might ensue to her aunt counted as nothing. She either could not understand or would not consider.

“ As the night wore on we finally descended into a valley surrounded by great hills. Through this valley ran a stream, its waters tumbling over white stones, and sparkling and rippling in the moonlight. A single light far to the right was hailed as home. And, as we drew nearer, I made out a great barn near the stream. And then came the house, shadowed by several great trees. I helped Rella and her mother down and followed them toward the house, where, as we neared it, we met two young, strong, sleepy sons coming to greet us.

“ ‘ I’ll tell you what you do, Rella,’ called the mother enthusiastically. ‘ Take a candle and go down to the cellar and bring up some apples and cider.’

“ Forthwith I was invited to carry the candle and a basket, while she carried the pitcher. Lighted by one feeble, yellow flame, we kissed in the shadows under the beamed floor, and then gathered a few apples and drew a pitcher of amber juice. I recall the thrill and bubble of Rella’s manner, the magic of her young face vaguely illuminated, the sense of danger in her eyes.

“ ‘ You’d better let me go now. Aunt V—— might come down.’

"Thinly experienced in life and its vagaries at the time, I was full of wonder that one so young and seemingly inexperienced could so practically and tactfully relinquish what she so obviously desired in favour of what might later be. Yet events were to demonstrate to me that caution, a sense of balance and self-protection, were as much a part of Rella's make-up as her gaiety and affection. Only no undue emphasis was placed on caution ; as a matter of fact, she seemed to me unconscious of danger ; and yet the quickness with which she was ready to seize a favourable opportunity, or to relinquish a dangerous moment, showed all too clearly how innate and secure was her sense of intrigue and the fitness or unfitness of the deeds and moments that compounded it. After one such moment as this, she could return—as I now saw—to the others, and with the air of one whom love has never touched.

"(Bright bird ! Beautiful butterfly ! Let me hold you, your wings untarnished !)

"The cider, cookies and apples disposed of, all confessed to weariness, and retired, while I once more wandered forth into the night. It was all too beautiful and exciting, and I could not sleep. Instead I walked, sitting finally upon the slope of one of the hills that rose directly behind the house, and meditating under the stars. Oh, love, I thought ! Youth, youth ! The fever, the agony of this infection ! How could it have flown so quickly in the one case only to burst so quickly into flame in another ? Were we, after all, but vials of fluid, compounded by another than ourselves and reacting to laws or stimuli which had little or nothing in common with our own social theories and procedures ? Or it seemed so—as though the very electrons of one's being in conclave assembled, or as by resolution voted or decided or swayed one, and that in the face of the staid polity of the world without. But whatever it was, the fever was exquisite. I burned. I ached. God, I thought, her exquisite young face, her graceful young body, her motions, smiles, eyes. That they should do this to me . . . and to her, maybe ! Or could it, in her case ? Was it so doing ? Did she really love me—respond as I was responding ? The thought was so painful that I could not longer endure it and so arose and returned to the silent house.

"But the next morning I was up early, eager to see her



first. The slightest glimpse of her was fire. And beside this delicious country land in July time, its smooth, green hills, its wide yellowing fields of wheat, and the still green fields of corn. The stream, an adjacent wood, a white ribbon of road leading out in two directions, all interested me. Within the barn-yard were pigs and chickens, and about the eaves of the barn strutted a flock of pigeons. A cultivated field of vines, heavy with raspberries and still half-grown blackberries, adjoined the house lot. In the fields beyond the men were already reaping, my host and his sons among them.

"After an hour or two spent in idling about, I returned to the house, to find upon a shaded kitchen veranda commanding a wide panorama, a table spread with berries and cream, coffee, bacon and eggs, and fresh biscuit, as well as milk and butter-milk—and all offered with apologies! My wife, wishing to help her sister, had already eaten, thus leaving me to make the best of a meal supervised by Rella. Yet I could scarcely eat for looking into her fresh young face—her eyes, her mouth, her hair!

"At the same time I was writing for several magazines, but I found myself scarcely able to work for thinking of her—the hope of seeing her, hearing her voice, looking into her eyes, touching her hand, all but deranging me mentally. And to increase the fever, she was here and there throughout the day, laughing, encountering me, at times, seemingly on purpose, at others avoiding me. There were calves and chickens to feed, a cake to make, furniture to dust. Gaily, as one who makes a pleasure of such tasks, she went about them, smiling or singing as she worked. Once, her hair down about her shoulders, she waved to me from an upper window. Another time she came to me where I wrote, presumably to bring water, but really for a kiss—yet how slyly, and with a cautioning finger to her lips.

"Beyond the barn was a great corn-field—a huge lake of corn—and beyond this the hut of an old fisher and trapper, who had come to the house on our first day and in whose life I had expressed a keen interest; thereby winning an invitation to call. When I spoke of going to visit him, I was told by Rella how easily I might go by a path which followed a fence and then cut through the field. 'And if you come back along the eighth row,' she whispered, 'I might meet you.'

“ At any other time I would have found this man interesting. In his hut were silver and red fox skins from this very region. He knew the art of fishing and hunting and had travelled as far west as the coast of California. But all the afternoon my heart and mind were elsewhere. I wanted the sun to sink, the evening perfumes to rise, to meet Rella among the rustling corn.

“ And at last I took my leave, eager—feverish, even—and yet dawdling along the path between rows of corn that whispered and chattered of life, and myself reciting scraps of a dozen poems. The perfume of the ground, the wind among the stalks and the distant trees, the calls of the birds—how they tortured now with their sweetness ! Indeed, they thrilled and fevered me as might great verse, having the lilt and ring of great lines. Of a sudden life seemed young, unbelievably glorious. For I saw her afar tripping between the sworded corn, her head bare, an apron holding something and yet tied so as to take care of itself. She looked behind her from time to time as she came, and then drew near and put up her arms. I held her close and poured into her ear the fascination she exercised for me. She did not speak at first, merely holding her lips to mine, then prattled of the weariness of the day without me. But soon she declared, as always : ‘ But I can’t stay. I must run. They think I’m in the barn.’ She left me, and misery settled upon me again.

“ There was another day. I went to a small stream to fish, hoping that she would visit me there. And where I stopped, vines and overhanging branches contrived a dell in which was a pool, a sandy beach, and fish visible in the clear water. Arcady. Wondering where she was and what she was doing, I turned, and there she was, peeping out from behind some greenery a dozen yards away. Dinner was only an hour off and yet she had brought me cake and a glass of milk in a small basket. ‘ I suggested it to Aunt V——,’ she laughed, ‘ and she told me to bring them.’ She laughed again. I took her in my arms.

“ The ground beneath the trees was mottled with sunshine. The small strand was of golden sand, as yellow as her hair. Beyond the stream was a solid, lichen-covered wall of grey granite, rising all of thirty feet, and behind us a thicket of

bushes, making of this leafy place an almost secret chamber. Alone with her here I felt freest of all, yet always in danger. For could we know whether we had been or were being observed? Howdershell, her mother, brothers, my wife. And yet, regardless, I ventured to hold her here, and she to submit, pulling her to a stone and sealing her mouth with mine. At last she ran away, picking up her basket as she went. Fifty feet away she put her head through some leaves and smiled back at me. 'You're not catching many fish, are you?' And she was gone.

"The next morning, before sunrise, I was up and out, seeking some dewberries I had seen growing near the wall of wood at the south end of the berry field. The wood-perfumed air and wet grass underfoot gave me a sense of living, breathing poetry, of life dreamily and beautifully lived. A surging sense of the newness and perpetual youth of the world was upon me. Here, I said, in the face of all individual age and death, in such fevers as these, in such moments as these, life contemptuously shows how for ever young and new it is. I may age, or another. I may die, or another. But life and youth go on. Sunrises come and go, and they are new to those who are newly come. The birds also, and the trees. New springs, new summers, new autumns, new winters, new springs again. New blood is being created to continue the whole thing for ever. But what of my love? What of my unhappy marriage? Soon this must end. I must end. And then what? How much, if any, of this eternal newness for me?

"And, as though to punish me for my gloomy philosophy, from that day on things seemed to take a turn for the worse. I had expected Rella to follow me into this glorious dawn to pick berries with me, but she did not. Instead, as she told me later, she could not—her mother had remarked that she might be annoying me. Later in the day I told her I was going to the stream to fish, but she did not come. Her mother had filled her moments with tasks. So that day passed, and with glances only, and those darkly veiled. The next day was almost as bad. I was beginning to feel that the shadow of suspicion was darkening this scene and making my stay untenable. Yet late that afternoon, having been for a walk and coming down the hill at the back of the house, I found

her picking berries. She had on an old sunbonnet of her mother's, and looked the fresh and innocent schoolgirl that she was, a fit companion for the summer and the fields. I felt sick at the thought of losing her.

"‘Want to help me?’ she began, with a safeguarding glance in the direction of the house.

"‘Oh, do I?’ I replied, drawing near.

"‘But I don’t know,’ she began at once. ‘I believe mamma suspects. You’d better not stand so close,’ and she pointed to a bush a few feet away.

"‘Rella,’ I said, bending over the more distant bush and yet talking to her, ‘you don’t know—I can’t tell you how it is with me. I want you so. I can scarcely sleep. What will come of this, do you suppose? Could you come to New York ever? Would you run away with me if I wanted you to?’

"‘Oh,’ she paused meditatively. ‘I don’t know. I hadn’t thought of that, you know. I don’t think I could now—not yet, anyhow—but I might come sometime if Aunt V—— would let me.’ She looked at me earnestly, dubiously, then laughed amusedly at this last thought.

"I felt a sinking sensation at the pit of my stomach. This optimism. This laughter here and now. Could she really feel as I felt—sense any of my great want? I feared not—almost *knew* not—and my heart was heavy, my spirit prone on the earth. I stared helplessly.

"‘I don’t know how I’m going to get along without you, Rella,’ I sighed.

"‘Oh, I’ll miss you terribly, too,’ she said, but not as I had said what I had said. It was all too tragic to me.

"‘Oh, Rella!’ I went on feverishly. ‘Do you really love me?’

"‘Yes.’ She bent over the bush.

"‘Do you?’

"‘Yes. Yes. But you’d better look out, Uncle Dan. They might see you from the house.’

"I moved away. ‘How can I go away and leave you?’

"‘Oh, how I wish I could go with you! I do! I do!’ was all she said. We talked but little more then, for her mother called to her for something.

"The next afternoon, working in the shade of an east porch which ran along the side of the house, I was made well aware that Rella was making as much of my presence as conditions would permit. She passed almost too often for one alive to the need of distracting attention, and finally, in order to be near me, as I guessed, decided to wash her hair so that she might come out and sun it near me, and perhaps—the vanity and coquetry of girlhood!—parade its golden glory to my view. Only, as she said—whispering it to me at first—she could not stay long. The atmosphere of suspicion in connection with us was plainly too great. But she could, and did, manage to pass and re-pass on one errand and another between the sunny veranda where I was and the inner room in which she was, touching me each time with either her hand or her skirt. And the glory of her bright hair now loose, haloing her wonderfully vivid and youthful face—the water-clarity of her eyes—the exquisite form and fullness of her lips! How mad it was, I said to myself over and over now, for me to even look at her, let alone wish. For was not, as I now noticed for the first time, my wife observing us from a window? Yet Rella again, passing me, stopped and asked me to *feel* her hair, how soft and fine it was. And as she did so the look she bent on me was one of sick repression—a look which greatly reassured me as to her own feeling for me, at the same time that it reduced me the more because of the imminence of loss. To think of her eyes speaking this longing! In spite of my wife, who was not visible at the moment, I took the mass of it in my hands and pulled her face toward me. She looked swiftly about, then gave me an eager, swift kiss, and went on. Scarcely had she done so though than my wife appeared in the doorway. There was in her eyes, as I saw at once, a hard, brilliant light which showed only when she was very angry. She went into the house again, only to return and just as Rella had ventured to come out once more. And now she said: 'Rella! Your mother wants you.'

"From that moment I realized that the worst impended. Black looks and secret persistent spying were in store for me. And a series of veiled, if not open, comments. For she would not, as I now knew, stay here any longer. And without her,

how could I? What excuse would there be? Sadly, if dourly, I proceeded to face realities. Apart from going with her if she decided now to go, there was but one thing—and that radical and incautious—an elopement with Rella. But, supposing the plan were put to her, would she say yes? If not, then what? Defeat and misery, of course. And yet, should she consent . . . then what? The hard and savage Howdershell, once he knew; the whispered and open comments in this region. Rella's repute. Mine. The vengeful ire of my loving but jealous wife. For, needless to say, one such move on my part and she would seek redress of Howdershell himself; effect, if possible, the return of Rella at any cost. And as for myself, once away with Rella, then what? The battle; the pursuit; the expense and social and mental disruption of flight. I was ensnared, yes—and oh, how much! The agony of it! But this . . . to Rella . . . to me . . . to all. Slowly, but surely, sadly and grimly—being neither radical nor incautious—I faced the inevitable.

“And from that hour, as I feared, I was met with suggestions from my wife as to the unwisdom of a longer visit here. A message from the home of her parents—or so she said—had already urged us to return there—for some event of no importance—a street fair, I think. Also the valuelessness of a longer stay in the west was emphasized. Was I not becoming weary of this country life? But when I pretended not to understand the meaning of this sudden change from pleasure in all this to a desire to leave, there were at first looks, then a fit of dark depression, and finally tears. I knew what was wrong. Did I dare pretend that I did not? I . . . I . . . who had done this . . . that . . . And so, in a flood, a flashing picture of my evil heart. Ah, what was I not? Had I no shame, no decency? Were innocent young school-girls not safe even in their own homes? Was I not astounded at myself, my scandalous temerity in attempting a flirtation with a girl fourteen years my junior, a mere girl in her teens, and who, by the way, ought to be ashamed of herself, too? It was high time we were getting out of here. We would go, and we would go at once—now—to-morrow!

“But, no—we would not go to-morrow—we wouldn't go before the following Monday, if then—and it was I who said

so ! Let her rage ! Let her tell the family, but I would not go unless ordered by them, if she wished that. I was resting. Why should I leave ? To avoid a possibly trying scene for herself, she finally yielded to this. But with stormy words and in a tempestuous mood. And so it was, with this situation in mind, that I was now compelled to face Rella—to tell her softly and with suggestions as to caution for herself, how matters stood. It was she who was being blamed, as well as myself—she, as well as myself, who had a problem to face—the first and greatest she had ever faced—and a dangerous one for her as well as myself. And now, how would she do ? Elope with me, for instance, or stay here and lose me ? And how did she feel ? Was she at all frightened ? Could she, and would she, think and act for herself ?

“But now, to my surprise and satisfaction, instead of exhibiting any trace of fear or tremulousness, she merely faced me, cool, even pale. It was too bad, wasn’t it ? Dreadful. If only she were a little older. She had hoped we would not be found out, but since we had been . . . perhaps . . . perhaps . . . well . . . Perhaps the best thing was to wait. And her father and mother might cause trouble right now because of Aunt V——, and what she might do. But later . . . listen . . . next winter she would be going to school over at Fayetteville, a hundred miles away. How about coming over there ? We could see each other there. The fifteen hundred miles that would lie between us at that time were, as it seemed to me then, all but meaningless to her. I could do anything, very likely. And yet, I knew so well that I could not—that she did not understand. I was poor, not rich ; married, not free ; shackled by the forces of life as much as she was, if not more, and yet dreaming of freedom and love, wishing to fly.

“And so it was that late that night, walking up the hill that lay to the south of the house, I was a prey to the gloomiest of thoughts. Despite a certain respect for convention and order which was still strong within me, the rude and haphazard compulsion which I now saw operative in all nature about me suggested another and less orderly course. For was I to be thrown to and fro like a ball by this intense desire ; derive no reward ? No, no, no ! Never, never, never ! For this

girl cared for me, and if pleaded with would yield, would she not? From where I sat even now I could see a light in Rella's room, and if I were to whistle or signal in some way, I knew she would come. But on the other hand, there was this respect—to a degree at least—for the feelings of these, her parents. And not only that but the fear of consequences to Rella and myself. Did she really know her own mind as yet? Could she? Was she really, truly, in love? Ah . . . the light in that window! Her unloosened hair . . . her face! I meditated a further extension of time here . . . beyond Monday . . . beyond the following week, even. But there was the battle that would have to be fought between myself and my wife. And betimes could she not, and would she not, whisper to her sister, the mother of this girl? And then what? The departure of Rella, of course.

“Beyond where I sat, the light poured like filtered silver over the fields of corn and wheat, and the patches of meadow bordered by squares of dark wood. Here and there in a small house still winked a yellow lamp. Dogs barked, hounds bayed, an owl or two ‘woo-hooed.’ And yet, for upwards of an hour, I sat thus, my head in my hands, meditating on beauty, and love, and change, and death. Life was too bitter and too sweet, I sighed, begrudging every fleeting moment of it here. For soon, in spite of all I might do now, this visit would be over. And I would return to D——, and then to New York. And when, if ever again, would I see Rella? When? Her tall, cold, thin-minded father, how I wearied of him now! And her mother, what of her? Could, or would, Rella ever really wish to escape the corded meshes of their goodness, their virtues? So, brooding, I sighed, and in heaviness of soul finally arose and started down the hill. Yet, half-way down, in the shadow of the wood alongside which ran the path, I was startled by a hooded figure hurrying toward me. Nearing me, the shawl was thrown back, the head lifted, and—it was Rella, perfect but pale in the sheen of the moon!

“‘Darling!’ I exclaimed.

“‘I had to come,’ she gasped. ‘I couldn’t stay away any longer. I know it’s late, but I slipped out. I hope no one heard. I was afraid I might not get to talk to you again. Mother suspects, I think. And Aunt V—— has talked to



her. But I had to come ! I had to !' She was short of breath from running.

" 'But, honey, dearest ! Your mother ! Your father ! If they should see you !'

" I paused, for I was thinking of something else now. For here she was with me at last, had come of her own accord. Therefore, now . . . since . . . was I not justified in . . . ? I paused, holding her, a strong, possessive, almost ruthless, fever driving me. And yet, so philosophic and reflective was my mind that even now I could not help asking myself in what unsophisticated, unworldly innocence was it that she had really come here—one too young, truly, to know the full import of her own actions or desires. But holding close to me and babbling of her love.

" 'I know papa's over at Walter's, and mamma's in bed. So is Aunt V——. I went up to my room and then slipped down. They won't know. I sometimes come out this way. But I had to see you ! I had to ! But, oh, I can't stay ! You know I can't ! It would be terrible for you if I were seen here. You don't know my father.'

" 'I know, I know, dear,' I whispered. 'You little innocent, you sweetheart,' and I drew her head against my shoulder and kissed her and smoothed her hair. 'But how did you know I was here, and how shall I do without you now ? Will you be mine ? Will you go with me now—to-morrow—next day ?'

" She looked up at me nervously and seemingly comprehendingly, thoughts of many things apparently scampering through her mind, then hid her face in my coat.

" 'Oh, no, no, not now !' she said. 'I can't. I know . . . I know what you mean . . . but I can't. Not this way. Not now. You don't know my father, or my mother, either. He would kill you. Yes, he would. Oh, dear ! I mustn't stay. I mustn't. I knew you were going, and I had to come. I couldn't stay away. Maybe next winter . . . if you would come for me. . . .' And she drew nervously away.

" 'Yes,' I replied wearily, sensing the impossibility of it all. And thinking : If Howdershell should know—if he should even guess ! And yet you coming this way, just when

I want you most—when it is hardest to resist. And not even understanding clearly. God ! And in a storm of pain I held her, saying : ‘ Next winter, maybe, if I can arrange it. So go now. And write me. I will slip you an address to-morrow. And I will write you here, or anywhere, anywhere you say ! ’

“ ‘ Oh, yes, yes, at Fayetteville. That’s sure, is it ? ’ she gasped hurriedly. ‘ But I must go. I’ll write you, sure. ’

“ She hurried down the hill in the shadow, and I gazed after her. The end—the end, I thought. There was blood on the thought. I heard a collie bark, then saw the kitchen door open and someone look out. I could only hope that she had safely reached her room.

“ Coming out by the wood-pile below the house some ten minutes later I stood gazing at the scene which the house presented. It was so simple, so rural—a strong, beamed affair, with rambling rooms, angles, small verandas and windows. But now no light. And inside Rella, safe, I hoped, not having been seen. But thinking what, now that she was alone ? As I was ? Or was she ? But I loving her so. And beaten ! Beaten by circumstances—life, parents, marriage, I know not what. I cursed, and hated, even, for I was sick of love—poisoned by it, even.

“ And then, of a sudden, as I stood there—and from nowhere, as it were, out of the dark or mist but without a sound—directly before me—Howdershell ! And cool and still in the moonlight, not a word issuing from his lips, his steady, green-blue eyes fixed upon me. Aha, I thought ! Trapped ! He has seen, heard ! Now then, what ? The worst, I suppose. The storm. I braced myself, my blood chilling. I was unarmed and I knew he was always armed.

“ ‘ A fine night, isn’t it ? ’ he began, calmly and, as I thought, coldly pretending a friendship he did not feel. (The instinct of the trapper, I added to myself. It is so he begins. How should I have hoped to defeat him ?) My veins were running ice water. ‘ Been out for a walk ? ’ His words had, to me, a mocking sound.

“ ‘ Yes, ’ I replied, as calmly as I could.

“ To my immense relief, almost my amazement, he now began drawling concerning a horse that had been, and still

was, sick, and that had needed his attention. Also of a neighbour who had come to assist him with his wheat. And damp with perspiration, I listened, concluding after a time that after all he had seen nothing, suspected nothing. Then this secret approach was without significance, a country gesture, the sly quip of one who liked to surprise and frighten another? But with what consequences, really, had he come upon Rella and myself!

"And then Monday—the day set by my wife for our departure but with us staying over for a day or two just the same. Yet, because of this shock—the dubious mood evoked in me by this moonlight meeting—no further attempt on my part to persuade Rella against her will. Rather only a dark, oppressive realization of the futility of all this. Yet, love and desire, an enthralling and devastating sense of her beauty—of what union, even free companionship, with her must mean. And so the pain of restraint and loss.

"Deep amid the tall, whispering corn, only one day before I left, a last meeting with her, to say good-bye. And it was she who, watchful, elusive, contrived it. She would write . . . she would come, even. I need not fear. And then, kisses, kisses. And after that, what glances! And almost before the eyes of her parents and her aunt. The lovelight that beckoned! At breakfast on that last morning she even sighed as she handed me something. I was wondering if she was really feeling as I was.

"‘Don’t you want me to send her poisoned candy?’ she whispered jestingly. This was apropos of a celebrated poisoning case then in the papers.

"‘Rella!’ I reproved. The thought startled me.

"‘Oh, I wouldn’t, but I feel like it,’ she said sadly.

"The stark, merciless, unheeding nature of love was being brought home to me then with a greater force than ever before. For here was youth, innocence, beauty—a paragon in form, really—and yet what was the defeat of this other woman to her? Nothing. A blood relation, and yet an enemy to be defeated. And as for life and law? What were they to this eager, seeking girl? Either not understood or only dimly, perhaps, and scoffed at. Yet even I in my fever could not help thinking of the ruthlessness of life. And yet, such was my

own infatuation that now in nowise could I be displeased with her for her fierce thought. Rather I was inflamed by it—made more desirous—perceiving as I did through this the depths of nature in this girl.

“And then, at parting, to see her boldly and proudly put her lips to mine (and that in the very face of her aunt), and then turn and offer those same lips to her, which offer was icily accepted. And all this before her mother (who must have known, yet for diplomatic reasons did not wish to indicate her knowledge) and her father, and the other members of the family. Even now I recall my wife’s eyes, clouded with hate and suppressed rage. And Rella smiling and defiant, proud in her young beauty. And then myself, riding back over the hills and through the valleys to D——, and despite the mood of the woman beside me, lost in reflections that were immensely depressing—to her as well as to myself.

For here I was, for all my fever and tossing, defeated. And my wife, for all her defeat, still, after a fashion, victorious. Yet both unhappy. And Rella, too. And so, further reflections as to the essential helplessness, and even slavery, of man—and this despite all his formulæ and in the face of his compelling passions. And so sickening because of the anachronisms of life. For here was I, wishing most intensely to be doing one thing and yet being shunted along this wretched path of custom and duty against my will. And afraid, or unable, to break the chains which held me. And behind me, Rella, who for all her strong desire and daring, was helpless. And beside me a woman, fuming and brooding about a force she could not possibly control, yet resolved never to resign what was ‘rightfully’ hers, and so clinging to the ashes of a long-since burnt-out love. And the parents of Rella and my wife’s parents assuming that happiness and order reigned where instead was molten and explosive opposition and dissatisfaction. And law and custom approving heartily.

“What a thin veneer is the seeming of anything, I thought ! How indifferent, and therefore merciless, are the forces that despite our notions and moods and dreams drive us all !

“In New York later I received some letters and a complaint from Rella to the effect that not only against her will was she being sent to a higher school but also being urged to marry a

doctor whom she did not like ; also a faint hint that if I would provide the means she might run away. But means at the time were not mine. More, for me at the moment life was wearing a face which made even love seem almost worthless. In fact, I was all but destroyed at the time, not only financially but physically—and so, not able to do anything. True, I wrote her in explanation but later ceased, knowing that only trouble could follow her through me.

“ And later, of course, other women took Rella’s place. As other men mine in her life. The unhappy union of which I was then half was finally broken up. Rella, sent to a relative in Texas, eventually married an oil speculator, whom I trust she loved. The last news I had of her was that after a visitation of some disease she had been left with a partially paralyzed eyelid, which completely marred her beauty. Also, that much of her wonderful hair had fallen out. And this before thirty.”

. . . . .  
Verily, “ what is man that thou art mindful of him ? He cometh up as a flower, and is cut down. He fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.”

# ERNESTINE



## ERNESTINE

**I** THINK that the conclusions that troubled her most, and finally decided her upon her eventual step, were, first, that she had in some way mismanaged the opportunities that had been hers, and next, that life itself was a confusing gamble in which the cards were frequently marked and the dice weighted. She was, I am sure, a little confused and saddened by her eventual realization that the field she had espoused was engineered by men and women without real intelligence or decency or understanding, and with scarcely any traces of the stabilities upon which we must lean at times if we are to live at all. Also, I think that toward the last she failed to find in herself enough of those stabilities to warrant her continuing. She was too much inclined, possibly, to look for worth in others—too little to compel it in herself.

If I were less convinced that life itself is anything but a game, arranged for as well as motivated by the greedy, the arrogant, the lecherous, and the heartless, with dullards and beggars and nincompoops at the bottom as their tools and pawns, I would be prepared to assail the members of the joyous profession of which she was a part. There is little that is too sharp or uncomplimentary, I assure you, that might be said of them—mercenary, covetous, sycophantic, lax, dissolute, malevolent, brutal—— But why go on? You may find lists that apply in Trent and Walker. Yet having said all this, I am still compelled to ask myself wherein they are so much worse than the members of any of the other professions that eventually and perforce, via related compulsions, find themselves in authority in life. If anyone or anything is to be indicted, let it be Life.

But to the tale itself.

The first time I saw Ernestine she was coming down the steps of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Station, at Eighth Street. She was very young, not more than eighteen or nineteen, and



sensuously, and so disturbingly, beautiful and magnetic. With her was an aspiring theatrical manager whom I knew—the type that begins with a “little theatre.” He was showing her the Village, I presume, and his air was that of the impresario. Hers was that of a very young, and not very sophisticated, person who condescends to take notice of a domain offered for her inspection. There was a moment’s pause while he introduced us, and then they were off. And yet, brief as was the contact, I could not but know that she was exceptional. The litheness and vigour of movement, which half denied a languorousness of temperament, which yet smote one ! The health, and gaiety, and poetry, and love of beauty ! Something about her suggested two of the lines in one of a group of poems later addressed to her by a writer and publisher who for a time at least was enormously taken with her.

“ I never taste the sweet exceeding thought  
That you might love me, though I loved you not.”

She was at this time interpreting something on the legitimate stage, and her true habitat was the white light region between 42nd and 59th Streets. But her flutterings over the surface of the Greenwich Village art sector of New York evoked not a little admiration and enthusiasm. The young artists and playwrights of the Village were, after a fashion, agog. She was quite wonderful, or so they said. One ought to see her. Even the women of the Village admitted, if a little grudgingly, that she had looks and a decided appeal, for men anyhow.

At a party later I was a witness to this marked appeal and the fever of passion and yearning which she evoked. Escorted by the same aspiring producer, she had entered, and immediately the attention of the men was centred upon her. Not that she was so remarkably intelligent or artistically forceful as that she had that indescribable something which all women fear and envy—sex appeal. Her temperament as well as her beauty was focal, and she knew it. Even while some of the women were inclined to find fault with her for one reason and another, they kept studying her, while throughout she remained cool and beaming—too cool, I thought at times, and too vain.

A famous critic of international repute—a student of types and personalities—was sufficiently impressed by her to enter on a long discussion of her type and American girls in general. “Now there is this Ernestine De Jongh,” he said to me. “These American girls are astonishing, really. They are not always so well equipped mentally, but they have astounding sensual and imaginative appeal as well as beauty and are able to meet the exigencies of life in a quite satisfactory manner, regardless of what Europe thinks; and that is more than can be said for many of the women of the other countries with which I happen to be familiar. By that I mean that your American girl of this type thinks and reasons as a woman, not as a man, viewing the problems that confront her as a woman, studying life from a woman’s viewpoint and solving them as only a woman can. She seems to realize, more than do her sisters of almost any other country to-day, that her business is to captivate and later dominate the male, with all his special forces and intelligence, by hers, and having done that she knows that she has bagged the game. Now I do not count that as being inferior or stupid. To me it is being effective.”

While I was interested by this bit of philosophy, which struck me as true, I was more interested by the fact that this particular girl, at her age, should have inspired it. For, distinctly, she was not intellectual, in the best sense at least, and the critic in question was all but impervious to the befuddling force of beauty. His opinion confirmed my impression that after her fashion she was a personage, not a mere chemical assault upon the sensual hormones of the male.

About this time I began to learn something of her history. She was from the American north-west. Her father was a well-to-do dairyman in that region from which the Tillamook cheese comes. There was an elder sister in Seattle who had taken this younger one to live with her after she had been so fortunate as to marry a man of means herself. There Ernestine had come in contact with, and aspired to, the stage, as represented by private theatricals in which her sister happened to be interested at the time. And there she had eventually come to identify herself with a “little theatre” movement. But, as she told me later, her father and mother were “old-fashioned and religious and very much opposed to the theatre,” and in

order to avoid anger and ill will on their part, she had for a long time concealed her interest in it. Finally, deciding to follow it as a profession, she had joined a touring company and changed her name—which was Swedish, I believe. There was the usual history connected with that venture, yet of not sufficient interest, or at least not sufficiently different, to merit a recital here.

I suspect that by then she had been in love more than once. Her manner was that of one who had learned to breast the stream of life with some little assurance. Plainly, she had come to realize the value and effect of her beauty, of which, as I say, she was markedly conscious.

It was perhaps six months or a year after I first met her that I began to hear of her as the mistress of a man of considerable reputation in the critical and liberal thought of the time. He was a poet, although of no great importance in that field. Personally, he interested me, not only as a character but as a man of force and appeal. For a period of years, beginning with his college days in New York, he had managed not only to sustain himself but others as well in the business of furthering one and another liberal or charitable cause—woman suffrage, child labour, a liberal, semi-radical paper, which he, or rather his patrons, financed. Also he had found time to write various books and essays full of fairly readable thoughts on poetry and reforms of various kinds. Incidentally, he was a handsome fellow, pleasingly cultivated in his ways and moods and without a trace of that aggressive, pushing, self-seeking need which too often one finds motivating those who are professedly interested in reforms.

That Ernestine understood him I doubt. More likely she was drawn by his virility, looks, charm and public repute—a man connected with the arts and intellectual matters. As she saw it, I think, it was rather exceptional for a man to be a writer and a critic and a poet all at once—one who could get his name into the papers and be looked up to by a number of beginners as a personage. In addition, he was really good-looking and gay. Apart from that, I doubt that she was able to share his finer moods. And yet she had a kind of crude reverence for them, as time was to show—a reverence, indeed, for everything connected with the arts and those who achieved in them, without quite knowing why. That she was obtuse to all phases

of his character I do not mean to imply. She understood him well in some ways, as was made plain by the manner in which she could set forth his methods and his own attitude toward himself—descriptions, in the main, very penetrating and illuminating.

Once she said to me : “ I never saw such a person as Varn.” (Varn Kinsey was his name.) “ When he wants to be nice I think he can be the nicest person in the world. He has such an air. And he thinks so well of himself—not in a silly but rather in a reverential way—as though he felt himself called by God or someone to fulfil a great duty of some kind. You know the sort of person I mean, perhaps. He looks upon everything he thinks, or says, or does, as important. What other people think and say and do does not appeal to him so much. And he never looks upon anyone else, whoever he may be, as more than an equal, if as much. For that reason, perhaps, he is always able to get money out of rich people for any cause in which he actually believes. I never saw such a person for finding people interested in the things he is interested in, and then playing up to them. I wouldn’t say that he is a toady, exactly, but he can always manage to talk to them, especially rich women, in a way that makes them willing to help him. Once he gets the money for any cause, though, he usually leaves to other people the work for which the money has been secured, resting and taking the largest salary for his pains. He used to say that he had done enough when he raised the money.

“ And of course he is always surrounded by a lot of minor people who look up to him as a leader and who do the things he feels he hasn’t time for. As for himself, he reads, and writes essays and poetry, and gets himself interviewed from time to time in connexion with the things he is supposed to be doing. I suppose he actually does render some kind of intellectual service to the causes he is supposed to further. He used to argue that the mere use of his name and the way he looked after things enabled him to get the money for the things he did. Also he added that it was necessary for him to live well and keep up appearances in order to help the causes he was interested in.”

This is one of those interpretations she could provide so freely after she had known Varn for four years and which caused me to think of her as intelligent. She analysed him then as from time to time afterwards she was able to analyse others.

When Ernestine came into Kinsey's life he was fifteen years her senior and married to a woman of ability and charm who was a painter and illustrator. But shortly after this meeting there came rumours of trouble between him and his wife. They were no longer so much together as they had been. They were quarrelsome. Where formerly Varn had been an arresting figure at Mrs. Kinsey's teas and affairs, now he was absent. Meanwhile he was being seen with Ernestine. I myself was once a witness of a happy dinner they took together. It was in one of those many-roomed, semi-theatrical cafés which abound north of Forty-second Street and it was the crowded hour between seven and eight. They came in while I was dining with a friend and found a corner near us, but without noting that I or anyone else was near them. They were too much engrossed in each other. Once seated, and before ordering, they fell into a deep and plainly affectionate conversation. So impressed was he by her beauty that he seemed to devour her with his eyes. And she, conscious of the spell that her charm had cast, sat back and allowed him to gaze upon her, bestowing upon him from time to time the most ravishing of smiles. And once he seized both her hands in his and held them while he gazed into her eyes.

"There is a man," commented my companion, "who most certainly is in love. It is charming, don't you think? He seems to view her poetically. He is obsessed with her beauty."

I agreed. Also, as I observed, more than one of those dining there glanced at them interestedly.

I should add that time proved that this infatuation was genuine, for he divorced his wife. And though he never married Ernestine, there was a live and close and seemingly happy relationship between them. He became conspicuously devoted to her, and for several years thereafter one scarcely saw one without the other. And yet I gathered from many sources at the time, and later, that she was by no means an affectionate slave. Rather, it was he who could scarcely sleep because of her.

Kinsey and myself, having little in common, rarely met; nor, except on rare occasions, did I encounter Ernestine. She was always busy with her stage work. But of her life and moods in connexion with him and herself I heard not a little from many who were close to them. While they were happy

for the first year or so (and that was the period in which the series of poems exalting her were written by him ; they are still extant), afterwards there had begun to appear difficulties in connexion with her work, or rather her interest in a new form of it. For just at that time a new type of opportunity, the motion picture, was coming into public favour, and with it newer and sharper conditions governing the rise of stars in that particular field. One had to be the mistress of somebody—director, producer, owner or backer—or so it was said. Nevertheless the opportunity for the concomitant enormous financial returns was being grasped and responded to by attractive and ambitious girlhood the country over.

I heard a great deal at the time of the interest a certain picture producer of great wealth and notoriety was taking in Ernestine, and the interest that she was taking—not so much in him as a man or a possible lover as in the power he possessed of rapidly furthering the career of anyone in whom he chanced to be interested, in this new field which he represented—(the Arabian lure of the movies in those days). And much against Kinsey's will and wish, as it now appeared, Ernestine had already ventured upon several screen tests in one and another of the new studios in New York, which were then mere floors or lofts in ordinary loft buildings. A new director of rumoured ability who was then operating in a loft in Union Square, had cast her for several minor rôles, which proved to her own satisfaction that she might shine in this new field if she applied herself and if opportunity favoured her.

But there was the rub. For Varn Kinsey would have none of it—that is, not with himself as a factor in her life. A bachelor of arts and inclined by education and training to look to the more serious productions of the stage for anything histrionically worthy, he was not in the least interested in the pretensions of those who were destined to feed the multitude with what it could grasp. In fact, he disliked motion pictures, and above all he was opposed to the conditions of advancement as those conditions were now being revealed to him. Any talk of the fat and powerful masters in that world who were holding tempting morsels of fame and wealth before such aspirants as Ernestine was likely to inflame and enrage him. As long as she was connected with the legitimate stage in

New York, where nightly he could find her—well, that was different. As for sharing her time at all hours and in all places with motion picture directors who had “locations” and such to propose—that was something else again. He would leave her if she attempted it.

Came finally a certain picture producer, part owner of one of the great film companies, who was much impressed by what he had seen and heard of Ernestine. Because of what he could do for her if he chose (I heard this from herself later), he expected her to take a great personal interest in him, and in spite of the crudity of his approach, and because of the great power he represented, Ernestine was interested, because, as she said later, she was almost abnormally ambitious. A craze for fame was driving her—fame and applause—and so, while evading him as gracefully as possible, still, because of what he might do for her, she sought to cultivate his friendship. But when intimation of this reached Kinsey’s ears, there was trouble. At the time—and not from her later—I heard of a storm which caused him to depart from his studio and take quarters in an hotel; also, that at three o’clock of another morning, later, she had followed him there and was all but beaten for her pains. After that came heartaches and reunions and separations, until finally there came a last separation. For a long time neither was to be seen about their old haunts. Ernestine, as I heard, had departed for studio work somewhere. Then, alone, Kinsey returned to the quiet and studious world that had known him. Obviously, he was too vigorous and interesting a man to share the favours of any woman, however attractive, with another, and that was what success in this work for Ernestine appeared to mean.

Some six or eight months later I was interested to see posted about New York on the bill-boards an announcement of a new screen drama or romance (one of the earliest of the six-reel productions), and with the name of Ernestine De Jongh as the star. In relatively modest type, as producer, appeared the name of the man who had been so engrossed in her the year before. Curiously enough, I had meanwhile met this man. He was one of those persons who think that the answer to everything—quite everything—lies in wealth and power. He was blond, red-blooded, dynamic, of the merchant and

organizing type, contemptuous of rivals and of the pretensions of others. Trade, the plastering of his name here and there as owner or producer of this, that and the other, the possession of pretty women—such were his ambitions. How Ernestine De Jongh, fresh from the allurements of such a poetically-minded person as Kinsey, could have turned to a man of this type was, from one point of view, and yet from another not so very, difficult to understand. While she admired Varn Kinsey's intellectual reputation, still more did she love finery and fame, and these the new-comer had to offer. So, I thought when I heard this, she has succumbed after all. Kinsey was not strong enough to hold her. There must be, I decided, a coarse streak there after all. The lure of fame ! The hope of distinction ! And in that field !

A week or two later I stepped in to see the picture, because I was interested to see the type of thing she was doing and whether her ambition in this direction was as justly grounded as her stage work, or whether this was a case of a medium prepared to flatter the vanity of one not legitimately suited to the work in hand. To my surprise and interest, the picture was entirely satisfactory, as such things go, and Ernestine also. The story ? Oh, well, it was movie-esque but very well suited to a girl of her beauty and charm, and built around just such a girl as herself. Its *premier pas* was in such a world as she must have come from—an old farm home. And she was pictured as a simple country maid, dreaming of love and some impossible earthly supremacy. There was the customary country lover, whom she favoured, and the city magnate who eventually realized her worth and gave her her chance. There was the usual romantic ending—a return to the old home, only to find that the one-time love had fled also and had scored a success scarcely less exceptional than her own. Whether they were brought together after the approved movie pattern, I do not recall.

But what interested me was that from a technical point of view the thing was very well done, and the support given her all that could be expected of those who labour in that very artificial field. Indeed, the whole thing seemed to suggest a sincere effort on the part of her sponsor to provide her with a proper medium. That meant then that he was really



interested in her. More, it seemed to me that she bade fair to prove acceptable to a large public. She was beautiful, and no expense had been spared to make her costumes and settings as striking as possible. After all, I thought, she may have chosen wisely, from a practical point of view, anyhow. This man appears to be sufficiently interested in her to do as well by her as could be expected.

A year or two after this an actor I knew who had been to the west coast in connexion with a screen contract returned to report a fascinating development in that part of the world. Los Angeles itself was not so much of a city—rather a Methodist settlement where formerly had been sand and cactus—but one of its suburbs, Hollywood, was certainly a new kind of thing. Pepper and palm trees and flowers had made it into a kind of paradise. And there were marvellous skies and mountains, and automobile roads splendidly laid, to say nothing of a coastline dotted with beaches. A new and different kind of cottage—the California bungalow—modelled very much on Japanese lines—abounded, and in them dwelt the most startling and reckless and extravagant of a new type of Thespian, the motion picture star, with a salary which made the salaries of the most successful of the “legitimate” workers seem low and small. A world of swagger and bluff and fine feathers was to be seen in surroundings which would inspire a poet.

Apropos of all this he suddenly added: “Did you ever meet Ernestine De Jongh who used to live here in New York?”

“Sure.”

“Well, you should see her place out there. She has one of the most charming little homes I ever saw. Not large, but different, and suited to that climate. She has a walled court, with flowers and a fountain in it at the back, and the most delightfully furnished rooms in the house proper. They are Japanese, with windows and doors that slide sideways into the wall and open level with porches and walks. And she has a Japanese cook and maid, as well as a gardener. She was working on a new picture while I was there.”

Well done, I thought. That shows how easily beauty united with a little practical sense triumphs in this world.

And then the conversation turned to the movie magnate whose interest had proved Ernestine’s opportunity.

"He's a grandee of sorts in the movie world out there, you know. He recently built himself a gorgeous residence in a place called Beverly Hills, which is just west of Hollywood. He's married, you know, and has a child."

"Is he?" I inquired, wondering, for I had thought that possibly . . .

Then he gave me the name of the actress whom he had married some six or seven years before.

"Well, what about Ernestine?" I asked.

"Oh, you know how it is," he replied. "Those fellows at the top in the game take their women rather lightly. I haven't a doubt that he cared for her at first. At least he gave her her start in pictures, and she has done fairly well. But those things never last, you know. A fellow like that meets too many beautiful aspirants all the time. And as things are now, it isn't very hard to launch one or two of them now and then. If she makes good, very well. If she doesn't, in the course of time she has to fall in behind those who do. The slate is wiped clean when they give a girl an opportunity. I think, all told, that Ernestine has nothing to complain of. She's been in three pictures, and is doing another now. He's out of it, however. I hear he's interested in . . ." and he gave me another current name.

Recalling the individual as I knew him and recalling also the nature of her attitude toward him at first, I could not help but feel that, apart from financial or practical considerations, the loss could not have been so much. She had probably never cared for him in an emotional sense. On the other hand, I could not help but feel that the relationship with Kinsey must have been of a different character. There are orders and orders of men and women. Some of them possess a sensitivity, a refinement, which takes and retains impressions deeply. Others are adamant, incapable of a scratch. And others are water, incapable of retaining any impression.

The thing dwelt with me. I still saw Kinsey about, alone as a rule, a book or two under his arm and always busy with those "reforms" which seemed to afford him such a good living. And then, three years later, I journeyed to the west coast, and under circumstances which tended to bring me in contact with the very element about which my actor friend

had been talking. Not that I was personally connected with the film industry in any way—it was from contact with others that I heard and saw a great deal. In truth, I had occasion to study the thing at first hand, but this is no place to record my impressions. In the main they would not be fit to print anyhow! The tinsel! The arrogance! The vainglory! The asininity! The waste! The fol-de-rol! The rush of a little temporary prosperity to the head! Vulgarians, mental light-weights posing as geniuses, creators, heirs to the Bard of Avon himself! And surrounding and overflowing all this, downright gross and savage and defiant vulgarity!

In my youth, as a schoolboy, I used to read and vaguely wonder at the nature of the pagan orgy. Stray bits concerning the florid passions and satiations of Sidon and Tyre and Greece and Rome and Antioch had blown my way, and I had wondered about them. Plainly, I argued then, in my innocence and ignorance, such things were gone for ever. The like of them would never come again. The world would not tolerate even a trace of such things as had been in those olden days. Yet, in the flower-covered bungalows of Hollywood and its environs, at that time, behind closed doors, and with obsequious assistant directors, camera men, masters and mistresses of wardrobe, alleged scenarists, and actors, all pandering to the elect as represented by directors and stars and managers generally, what nights! Representative of an older, and presumably concluded, world. I doubt if either novelist or historian has ever painted scenes more suggestive of what the ancients are supposed to have known than were here visible to the living eye. Drunkenness, lechery and gluttony were the order of the night, and the following morning, for that matter. Gestures and dances and erotically-worded appeals, calculated to urge the lagging or to hearten the half-hearted. Promiscuous pawing. Indiscriminate and public caressing. Actors, directors, stars and stockholders all united in an orgy of self-satiation, and without the danger of publicity. And on the part of those anxious to succeed in pictures at almost any price, a desire not to offend. And over it all a kind of compulsion arising from not only the power but the will of those in authority to bring about just such effects as were here being achieved.

This may sound like an exaggerated picture, but it is not. And it is entirely probable that power and affluence, wherever these same chance to be achieved, ever tend to licence after the manner here indicated. You are to remember that commercial power and affluence to a fantastic degree had descended upon many who had never previously known either.

And of this world was this girl, now something of a personage. I will not say that she was an enthusiastic member of it, because I do not know. Nevertheless, she was distinctly of the mind or mood to countenance all that she saw here for the sake of the advantage it might bring her financially. Then, more than now, the grantees and magnificoes of this realm—the male portion at least, to say nothing of a heavy percentage of the women themselves—were determined to satiate themselves at any cost. Rules were even made that no young married woman of any shade of loyalty to her vows need apply for advancement in this field, and no unmarried woman of any great beauty or physical appeal need apply unless willing to submit herself, harem-wise, to the managers and directors, and even principals. For in nearly all cases at this time the principals were able to say with whom, or without whom, they would work. And if a girl were young and attractive she had to be hail-fellow-well-met with every Tom, Dick and Harry from prop-boy and office-scurllion to director, casting director and president. She had to “troop,” be “a regular fellow.” The fact that Ernestine for several years was a figure in this local scene would—so it seemed to me at the time—indicate that in part at least she did as the Romans did. Still, one may seem at times and yet not actually be—though I met her at one of these bungalow parties at the “home” of a famous director one evening and was a witness to much that I have just described.

The entertainment had been in progress for several hours when the group of which I made one entered. Plainly there had been a steady flow of liquors. Quite all of those present were the worse for what they had already consumed. Girls and men—orchids and fashion plates—were here in number, dancing, singing, talking, or rallying one another about things with which they were familiar. Occasionally they disappeared, pair by pair, into one of the numerous minor rooms, only to

reappear after a time smiling and defiant. Amazingly frank and frankly insulting questions were asked and answered. "If it isn't little . . . ! And only three months ago she was so shy !" "Come see, fellows ! Look in here ! And drunk, too !" "Is it your idea, Clarice, that wearing so little will make you more enticing ?" "Who's the beauty D—— has brought with her to-night ?" (This from a girl star of national and later international fame.) "Bring your girl friend over, D——, and introduce me, will you ? We'll put sawdust on the floor and liquor on the table." "Say, Willard, you're needed in here. You're the only one will do, it seems. . . ." Assort and arrange and apply such things for yourself. Your fancy cannot go very far amiss.

But, as I say, Ernestine De Jongh was there, and before her was one of those large, bull-like "heroes" of the film world, in *de rigueur* evening clothes but much the worse for liquor. He was taking such frank liberties with her as I would never have dreamed possible in her case, and she was passing the same off with a half-intoxicated smile, protecting herself as best she could but not very forcefully at that. Thinking she might recognize me and not wishing to embarrass her, I turned away, and after a time left without actually speaking to her.

But having seen her again I was interested to learn of her state after these several years. She had looked about as attractive as ever, though not quite so young, with a way and air and a ready humour that was pleasing enough. On inquiry I learned that financially she was about as well placed as ever, having a car and the bungalow and considerable work as leading female support to one star and another, male and female. Yet she herself was no longer starred. A competent interpreter of such rôles as were assigned to her, still she was placed second to one and another movie queen or king of probably no greater acting ability than herself. Why ? By more than one casting director I was told that while she was a competent actress, still her colouring, which was dark, and her height, about five feet seven inches, were not in the mode just at the moment. Besides, she was looked upon as rather serious, more so than most of the stars then shining, and directors desired and required types which were all that youth

and beauty meant but without much brains. They liked to provide the "thought." "They say that when they think too much, or even a little, they lose that girlish something which is very much in demand at this time," one casting director explained. I am convinced that he spoke the truth. The annual movie output of that period should attest the soundness of his observation, I think.

Yet from time to time she was appearing in current successes, such as they were, and at a salary of three hundred and fifty to five hundred dollars a week. There was a film comedian of some standing and considerable intelligence who was considered to be one of her best friends. In fact, there was a small circle of semi-intellectuals in that region who paid no little attention to her and with whom she was engaged socially when she was not working.

During all of a year after my arrival, just one incident brought her to mind again. That was the sight of Kinsey one spring evening strolling along Hollywood Boulevard. He was dressed correctly for Hollywood—white flannel trousers, light silk shirt, a short, belted, grey coat, and no hat. Under his arm were a couple of books and a light overcoat. (The evenings are always cool in Hollywood, winter and summer.) The thought came to me that there must have been a reunion, else why his presence here? I hoped so.

And then one day, perhaps as much as a month or six weeks later, I received a letter from Ernestine. She had seen my name in a paper, as I guessed, and something that was said caused her to be interested. Or perhaps it was Kinsey who had spoken of me. At any rate, it was an artfully worded invitation to meet someone who was most anxious to see me and who was presuming upon her ancient and brief contact with me for the opportunity. I could read or feel that there was something she wanted at this time. But what? The comparatively recent glimpse of Kinsey caused me to go back in thought to him. Psychically I caught something—the thought that maybe there had been an attempt on her part toward a reconciliation and that possibly, the thing having come to nothing, she had decided to use me in some way, possibly as a flag or a rag of a provoking shade to wave in his face. Could that be? I wondered.

Curious as to the import of this, I looked her up and found her in her very charming bungalow. It was a lovely place, really a tasteful and colourful thing, and suggestive of a genuine love of beauty in her. After my one sight of her at the party I was prepared to find her sensibilities hardened, but this was not the case. She was gracious, tactful, artful, not unlike her old self, and yet more interesting because more experienced. She told me much concerning the lives of movie celebrities, their interests, relative positions, moods, successes, failures. I was not only interested in but struck by a subtle under-current in her talk which seemed to suggest, if not actually blazon, a certain dissatisfaction with herself and the world in which she found herself. It was this, that—so hectic and yet in the main so shallow and vapid. After a little while she began talking earnestly of Kinsey and the old life. In short, becoming interested, she proceeded to outline carefully just why she had left him. He was too dictatorial, or was tending to become so, in connexion with what she did, her work especially. All the while, though, she was plainly manifesting the keenest interest in him, yet without seeming to wish to do so. It was noticeable. He had been out here, she said, in connexion with a great folk drama which was being planned and for which—the money-raising and staging ends of it, at least—she had ventured to suggest his name. Not that she wished to re-establish the old relationship. Distinctly she hinted the reverse of this—but rather because he was so well fitted for the task and she could be of service to the enterprise and him also. He had come and gone and she had not seen him more than two or three times. He was as interesting as ever, but of course . . . And then she gave me to understand that the old relation was done for, and that she had definitely willed it to be so. I wondered.

As for the picture magnate, there was never a word which could be construed as an admission that there had ever been anything but a strictly business arrangement between them. He, or rather some members of the organization he controlled, had seen her in some of the plays in which she had appeared in the east and had been interested in her possibilities on the screen. Later he had sent for her and had offered her the title rôle in one of his productions. "I know that some

people think differently," she emphasized, "but that was all there was to it. During the first two years I starred in four of his productions, then another company sent for me and I did some work for them. Since then I have been free-lancing, as most of the people in this work are." And she gave me an interesting account of the drawbacks that attend a five- or ten-year contract, assuming that one were so foolish as to make one at the opening of one's career. The one point that remained a point was that by these varying organizations, and since those first days, she had never been starred. I could see and feel that she had sold herself for "a mess of potash," as one of Thackeray's amusing characters used to say.

Followed a number of meetings during the course of which she gave me my first keen insight into the type of woman who was pressing to success in so many of the "sweet sixteen" romances of the hour. There was but one answer, of course, in quite every such case, though she never said so in so many words. Making due allowance for such few celebrities as came to their positions because of a tremendous ability manifested before ever they were called to the screen, they were mostly female adventurers, if not libertines, and, to a very marked extent, wasters. They had to sell themselves to the highest bidders or fall, and quite uniformly they sold themselves. They had no essential refinement; they were suffering from complexes relating to dress, beauty, and screen recognition, to say nothing of the personal approval of men they considered marvellous accomplishees of this, that and the other, yet who, in the main, were bounders and dubs and wasters like themselves. The substance of her observations, along with those of others, is to be found in a series of articles published by me in one of the screen publications of the time. All that she reported could not be published, of course, owing to censorship limitations.

But it was not these things, irritating and discouraging as they were, but herself in relation to them and to such ideals as at any time she may have possessed, that interested me. She knew this and resented, I am sure, the worst phases of her career, and yet set up a purely material defence. Her bungalow, her clothes, her car, her friendships in this world, depended upon her accepting the conditions as she found them, you



see, and more, pretending to like them, if actually she did not. I suspected, and am sure that I am right, that for some time she did like them, captivated by the flare and show and animal spirits of this realm. Her appearance at the party I attended indicated as much. Later, like the prodigal son, having had her fill of this particular kind of husk, her mood tended to revert, for a time, anyhow, to that other world of which Kinsey was a fair representative. She was overawed, if not actually captivated, by the mental and artistic prestige which Kinsey and that world had represented to her and which this present world of hers did not.

And after a very little time, by the uses to which she attempted to put these contacts with me, I could see that such was the case. Despite all she had to say about the characters and methods of one and another of these seekers and beginners, to say nothing of those who were already successful, still, like every other person in that decidedly weedy field, she was endeavouring to get ahead herself as best she might. I began to see that one of her principal sins was to overawe some of these celebrities with her connexions and contacts in the Kinsey realm. Also that, after a time I was likely to be used to the same end. That is, being used as a stalking horse or decoy for another. She could scarcely suggest a walk, a drive, or a dinner, or a quiet hour's chat anywhere, without having as an ulterior purpose an ending-up at some café or club or bungalow or apartment where one was likely to meet one or another of the "bigwigs" and under such circumstances as were most certain to reflect credit upon her. And on such occasions she was almost insistent upon introductions and "Who's Who" explanations which could only prove disagreeable. More than once I was compelled to make it plain that I abhorred promiscuous introductions, especially in this field. I had no stomach for such manœuvring as she was indulging in. Our friendship must rest upon simpler and less conspicuous things if it was to endure. This, as one hears it phrased these days, she accepted in principle but not in fact. And yet, in spite of all her faults, I liked her as a type and example and made strenuous efforts not to prove too irritable or inconvenient.

But it was not to be. In spite of all hints, and even definit

objections, there was this tendency on nearly every occasion that we met. Irritated one afternoon by the sudden descent of a group when it had been plainly understood that there was to be no one, I left, and that in the face of the suddenly assembled company. Thereafter, our contacts were not so numerous, accidental mostly, in the streets or restaurants.

But during the time that I was with her I was really fascinated by the picture she presented of one who keenly realized the defects of the world in which she found herself and because of that I was troubled at the thought of an ideal implanted in her by Kinsey which she was unwilling to relinquish. Yet, at the same time, as I could see, she was still anxious to unite the two fields in some way, to make herself something in both. Once she brought out a book of poems written by Kinsey and showed me those she liked most. They were obviously about her and it was easy to see that she was still fascinated by the tribute. She spoke of his genius, his essential culture and superiority—so different from those with whom she was now associated. In the room also was a portrait of her by an artist friend of Kinsey's, made at the time that they were still together. The painter had caught not a little of that remarkable appeal that was hers then. By contrast I was forced to note that after a lapse of about six years she had coarsened and hardened to some extent, and yet not so much as to make it disturbingly apparent. There was still about her at times, especially when she was made up to go out, that seeming freshness and youthfulness and inexperience which had characterized her when I first saw her, and which no doubt she sought consciously to retain. When she inquired if I thought she had changed any, I gallantly lied.

At the same time I was compelled to note that in so far as her speech, manners, and thoughts were concerned, especially when she was seriously engaged in conversation and not posing, many of the marks of her later sophistication were apt to become apparent. Little things like an expression, verbal or facial, or a word of reference to a place or person (such as the rooms of a wretched director whom I knew and who was subsequently debarred from any connexion with studios anywhere) threw an all but searing light upon her. I could see that in spite of anything she might say or do, she had drunk

deep at this well, and now, curiously enough, was ashamed of the meaner aspects of it all. In so far as one might guess from her conversation, she had never been to any such party as the one described. (She never knew, of course, that I had actually seen her at one.) She wanted to be the woman whom Kinsey had idealized. That finer poetic something which was in him, and which she had once known and recognized, she now craved far more than anything else that could have come to her. At times there was something poignant in her references to him and the life they had known together.

About that time there came the first and most serious slump in the motion picture industry. For one or another of the various reasons assigned at the time—over-production, importation of foreign films, extravagance on the part of those engaged in production, the determination of Wall Street to force a reduction of expenses and smaller salaries upon all principals, a falling off of attendance at movie theatres—production all but ceased for something over a year. Such salaries as were paid were cut to one-half or less. Perhaps as many as forty thousand workers of all sorts and descriptions were most disastrously affected for more than a year. Literally scores of directors, who posed as dictators and masters and had built for themselves imposing homes and strutted about with the air of princes, were compelled to close or dispose of these either permanently or temporarily. Stars, staresses, and starettes, of much or little repute, to say nothing of actors and actresses of the second lead, “heavies,” “vamps,” assistant leads, *ingénues*, camera men, assistant directors, scenarists, and so on, were compelled to abandon, for the time being anyhow, their almost luxurious fields of employment, and wait, making the best of a dreary period during which their incomes ceased. Literally hundreds of the most artistically fashioned and luxuriously furnished bungalows and homes of those connected with this industry were either offered for rent or after a time the leases and contents sold outright. The fifty or more once humming studios of that western metropolis stood silent and idle. Toward the end of the year absolute panic seemed to seize upon nearly all who had been waiting so patiently for some signs of resumption, and by degrees they moved into other fields—vaudeville, the legitimate stage, designing, dress-

making, millinery, beauty parlours—in fact, everything or anything that offered. By the beginning of the second year nearly all had returned to the east, hoping to sustain themselves in some way there until better times should come again. Indeed, a year and a half had passed before there was even a shadow of a change in this very depressed field.

During this time I saw very little of the woman whose career had thus far interested me. Once, in front of one of the larger studios, which was practically inoperative, I chanced in passing to see her and another actress just leaving the place. But there was no motor-car in sight. This was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and the absence of a car in her case at that time struck me as odd. During the days of her prosperity I knew that she never ventured anywhere unless in her own or another's car or a taxi. Later, meeting her upon the principal thoroughfare, I was told by her that she had been compelled to give up her home and her car because of conditions in the business. She had, however, she said, taken a rather charming apartment elsewhere, which I was to come and see. She was living much more simply now—everyone was. It had not been possible for her to maintain the old scale of living for some time past. No one knew when things would be better.

I did stop at her new place one day, and found it pleasing enough as to location, though far from being as attractive as her bungalow. The latter had represented an outlay of perhaps seven or eight thousand a year. This might have cost as much as fifteen hundred, furnished—no more. From a brief talk with her I gathered that she was dubious as to her future. She was apparently alone and at the time not interested in anyone, unless, perhaps, it was Kinsey, who was no longer interested in her. The tendency of those who planned and directed pictures, she complained, was ever away from those who were proficient, if ageing, however slightly, and toward those who were young and inexperienced. Inexperience, where joined with youth and charm, though not necessarily ability, was at a premium with most of the dominant directors because they could use and mould these aspirants to their will and mood, taking all the credit for the result. Besides, here was this amazing slump, or cessation, the end of which

no one could foresee. She hinted that she, too, might sell the furnishings of her house (which all this time had been carried on a lease), and return east, where, of course, the legitimate stage was her only hope. Nevertheless, she still continued to carry a certain air of optimism and make-believe security such as is affected by most in that world.

Just about this time—a week or ten days before, I think—the papers had reported the death by suicide of a girl we both knew—one of the pleasing figures of the world of which Ernestine and Kinsey had been a part. The life and experiences of this girl are too long and too complicated to inject here ; they would make a novel, and a powerful one. The thing that interested me, and that I foolishly commented upon at the time, was that particular atom's very courageous outlook on life and death. More than once I had heard her say, and this I now idly related, that she counted the years from sixteen to twenty-eight as the very best of those granted to women. After them came, more than likely, the doldrums. Come what might, her purpose was to spend these years as she chose. At the end . . . well . . . And it was so, at twenty-nine, that she had ended herself—with a sleeping potion—after an almost fantastic career.

Ernestine appeared to be intensely interested. She drummed on the table with her fingers as we talked, and after we had concluded seemed to be thinking deeply.

"I think she was right," she said, after a time. "I believe in that. I despise age myself. Anyone who had been really beautiful and knows what it means will understand."

I looked at her curiously. There was something intense and, I might say, predetermined in the way she spoke.

I saw nothing more of her. The next time I passed that way a "For Rent" sign posted in one of the windows of the apartment stared at me. So she has gone, I thought, and stopped to see if her name was still on the plate. But it had been removed. Later, I heard that she had sold all her furniture and gone back to New York. Three months later, the series of articles the data for which she had largely furnished having begun in one of the magazines, and the newspapers

having reprinted some of the most startling and disturbing facts detailed therein, I received a laconic "Thanks" by wire, and so I understood that she had been reading them and approved. But after that I heard nothing until one morning all of the Los Angeles daily papers carried an extended dispatch from New York covering the suspected suicide in Greenwich Village of one Ernestine De Jongh, quondam screen star, who, in an apartment which formerly she had occupied while connected with the legitimate stage in New York, had turned on the gas. No data as to a probable cause was available. It was true that she had been connected with pictures and that these were now in the doldrums, but it was not believed that she was in need of money. Her family, so it was said, was well-to-do, and had been notified. No letters or least scrap of writing had been found. It was not known that she was in love with anybody, though it had been rumoured recently that she was engaged to a certain famous star. Subsequently he denied this, insisting that they had been merely friends.

But I thought I understood. Somehow also I thought I understood why she had returned to the scene of her older, and possibly happier, days with Kinsey. Or did I? At any rate, there she went, and there they found her. I never learned what, if any, part he played in that latest development. No one seemed to know that he had played any. It was said that he was very sad.



RONA MURTHA





## RONA MURTHA

**H**ER name brings to mind a delightful spring and summer early in the last decade of the last century and a very tall office building in the financial heart of New York. At that time I was a mere beginner in the world of letters, having essayed but a few articles and one or two short stories.

And at that time, as novices sometimes will, I had made friends and common cause with a young writer of about my own age and predilections who had recently arrived in New York. He was brilliant, good-looking, semi-idealistic, in philosophy at least, but useless for almost any practical purpose in life, and yet—and perhaps for that reason—most interesting to me. As I saw him then and see him now, he was a dreamer of dreams, a spinner of fine fancies, a lover of impossible romances which fascinated me by their very impossibility. Also he was jolly, generous, a lover of life and of play, mostly play as I later came to think. His weakest and most irritating trait was a vaunting egotism which caused him to imagine, first, that he was as great a thinker and writer as had ever appeared; second, that he was at the same time practical, a man of the world, a man of affairs. Let him but give his solemn attention to any muddle and it must come straight. Let him but think seriously, and every philosophic as well as practical riddle was solved. In short, he loved to direct and control as well as argue. Because I liked him much, as did nearly everyone else with whom he came in contact, I was inclined to let him have his way in everything. He was too delightful and interesting not to humour.

But, as I soon discovered in talking to him about his past, not a few things that he had hitherto attempted to solve or set right for himself had gone wrong. At twenty-two, for instance, he had married a most charming and intelligent

girl, and at twenty-three he was the father of a child and the putative bread-winner of the family and director of its destinies. But in a Shelleyesque manner (which had he ever achieved great repute would have been forgiven him), he had walked away and left both to shift for themselves. But to be duly truthful in the matter, his wife was essentially capable and better able to take care of herself than he was of taking care of himself. He was always one of those idealists who needs someone to look after him.

At the time we met I had a home to which he could resort, a table at which he could dine, and some little money to pay for outings here and there. Also I had entry to several magazines. So we lived, dined, walked, talked together. Quite everything that he did and said and thought was right with me, even though I knew at times that it was really quite wrong—for instance, the way he neglected his wife and child. But affection will blur if not obliterate a great many defects. And so close did this union become that nearly all of our literary work was done together, side by side, he advising with me and I with him. Nearly all of our week-ends and holidays were joint affairs, my wife being quite as fond of Winnie (Vlasto was his last name) as was I. Together one summer, then, we visited his old home on the Meshant River in Michigan, romping and playing an entire month or more. Indeed, spiritually, or in all the things that relate to mind, beauty, art, we were brothers, and according to Winnie, destined throughout all the dry and trying days this side the grave to aid one the other. Ah, yes! Even now I can hear his voice, see his blue eyes, sense the vagrom charm of his all too vagrom dreams—the mere feel of him, his invariable optimism and gaiety as set over against my all too solemn and personally disquieting contemplation of the fate of man. He had a way of making so much out of nothing. Money? Pooh! It was for those who no longer had the capacity to enjoy life. Mind was the key to every secret and every delight. Love and delight—these came to those who were made for them, preordained by their very chemism to enjoy them. Did I not know that? Alas, all too well I did. It was the hardest phase and face of the structure of life for me to contemplate, or for him

either at such moments as he was compelled to face the same.

But Winnie had developed what he labelled "a doctrine of happiness," about which he talked and wrote much, but which was little more, as I saw it, than a kind of self-salving, soul-salving way of escaping a too galling routine of duty. For the first rule of his new, cheerful doctrine was to be happy oneself, regardless of others and come what might ; only in order to give it a somewhat more humane look it was explained that by so doing one conveyed happiness and sunshine to others—a doctrine which struck me as a contradiction in terms. Notwithstanding said doctrine, he was by no means so utterly happy himself—always, albeit doing his best to believe that he was. There were his wife and child, for instance, for whom he was not providing, and in connection with whom he was salving himself with all sorts of sophistications. He was faithful, was he not ? And it was his plan to do something for them as soon as he had the necessary means. And his wife was really a better business man than he was. Which was true enough.

As for that faithfulness which he sometimes offered in extenuation, well, he was fascinated by women—almost any young, pretty, and intelligent girl—and he could not see why he should not be allowed to make friends and play with them. And most women he met were inclined to agree with him. Yet I honestly think that up to this time quite all of his relations with women were platonic. Only so pagan and pantheistic by nature was he, and so instinctively resentful of all chains, ties and obligations—those binding him to his wife and child as much as any—that it was difficult for these relations to remain wholly simple, to the eye at least. He could grow so affectionate. Even the normally conservative woman appeared to wish to indulge him.

Having said so much, let us leave him at this point and turn to another scene and situation.

One day, having completed a short article, I put it in my pocket and set out to find a typist. Another errand taking me into a certain large office building in the financial district, I saw, in the lobby opposite a bank of elevators, a gilt-framed sign which read :

RONA MURTHA

Court Proceedings

Law Stenography—Conventions

Commercial and Literary Typing

Mimeographing, Multigraphing

*16th Floor*

Bethinking me of my story, I proceeded to the sixteenth floor, where I encountered a young and quite attractive woman who interested me not a little from the point of view of alertness, awareness, and efficiency. She was, as I casually guessed, in the vicinity of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age; small, graceful, and carefully dressed in a close-fitting, tailor-made suit, white collars and cuffs, a bright tie, and sturdy little shoes. In the left pocket of her shirtwaist were various pens and pencils. Her ample supply of bluish-black hair was parted over one temple and then manipulated into a graceful roll at the back.

But what interested me almost as much as herself was the apparent magnitude of the commercial industry of which, plainly, she was the head. The room itself, which could not have been less than thirty by sixty feet, with windows on three sides, commanded a wide and striking prospect of nearly all the upper part of Manhattan Island as well as the East and North Rivers and the Jersey side of the bay. Interiorly it was crowded with benches like a schoolroom; some twenty or more desks, each with a typewriter attached. And at each desk an industrious, if not always attractive, typist. For the directress of this busy chamber, as I soon learned, did not view the comely typist of tradition with any too kindly an eye. She was not calculated, as she frankly said, to concentrate whole-heartedly on her task. And as I at once noticed, while her own large, square desk—a most pretentious affair—stood between two tall windows commanding the best of the views, those of her assistants faced her and the less interesting views.

On this occasion very little passed between us, as I recall, save conversation as to terms, which, incidentally, proved to be quite reasonable. She did add, however, that though legal

work was the main body of her business, she liked to do "literary work," because even though there was little money in it for her, she was so interested in books and stories—yes, even articles such as mine. At once I was both interested and amused. To find anyone moved to type anything I had thus far written for the pleasure of doing "something literary" was, as I saw it then, not a little naïve. My stuff literary ! Indeed ? In the face of indifferent or better, as yet, wholly unconscious editors and publishers, something to know. I went away asking—and could one obtain satisfaction from the writings of one who had no reputation, was not known ?

Encountering my fellow-craftsman at dinner, I told of the find I had made—a typist who was not only pleasing physically and mentally, but from a practical point of view most inexpensive. And because of the large staff she employed, she would be able to return a manuscript typed within three or four hours, assuming that one left it before noon. More, she was impressed !

Now this recommendation so affected my friend that a day or two later, having a manuscript of his own to be typed, he announced that he was going to the same place. And, to my surprise, I did not see him again for several days. When he did return he stated that he had been with a friend whom he had not seen for a long time. I was surprised and dubious, but not pressing. Presently, not suffering any inquiries on my part, he began expatiating upon Miss Murtha. I was right. Not in a long time had he met anyone more intelligent, generous, accommodating, the soul of efficiency and business skill. Had I talked with her much ? I confessed I had not. Well, he had, and had discovered that she possessed a world of common sense as well as literary and artistic judgment. In his first interview with her, as he now explained, he had come to know her quite well. In short, and from the first, it was as though he had known her for years. Indeed, he had even visited and dined at her home—a most comfortable one in Jersey City, as he now explained, where *Rona*, as he already called her, dwelt with her mother, a maiden aunt, the girl who acted as her assistant manager at the office, and an old Irish cook who also functioned as general factotum. I was very much interested, but knowing his way where girls were concerned, not very much surprised.

But this was but the beginning of things. For there was a second disappearance of several days' duration, which, incidentally, brought to a standstill a bread-and-butter article we were jointly composing. Later, he returned to say that again he had been with Rona, or rather her family, yet only in the purest or most platonic sense, as I must most unhesitatingly as well as truthfully believe. For this, of course, was one of those rare and entirely platonic contacts wherein people immediately come to understand each other. Indeed owing to a profound psychologic as well as temperamental appreciation, the one of the other, as well as a wholly frank explanation on his part of his present economic and social or marital state, Rona had suggested that since he was quite without funds at present, he might just as well occupy a room in her home. There were several unoccupied. And certainly, as he put it, I saw nothing wrong in it. Was not art, art? And an artist a privileged as well as to be encouraged gift to the world? I thought so. Certainly therefore there was nothing essentially wrong in it. Kismet. Less poignant and less sensual than myself, he could undertake such relations, I was sure, without necessarily involving a climax.

But let that be as it will. The more immediate thing in so far as I was concerned was that he had already told her all about me—the essentials and peculiarities of my own erotic vagrom and at times altogether incalculable disposition, interests, relations. Also (he was sure) she understood them. And in addition all about *us*—the peculiarly harmonious and now altogether enmeshed psychology which caused us at first sight, as in the case of love between the sexes, to at once recognize each other for what we were, and Damon and Pythias-wise, or what you will, to fall mentally and socially in step.

But I am beforehand with my tale, as I see. For there is that old brownstone house in Jersey City. It is still there. Years after all this I now tell had gone, I passed it once, of a summer evening. Strangers were sitting upon the old brown stoop in front, as once long before and of a summer evening, Winnie, Rona, her mother and aunt, and myself and my wife had sat, talking and dreaming. There were the same (as to design) brown awnings; the same open windows, open

to the cool of the evening ; and the voices of the various neighbours on their stoops. Only now a new Rona gazing adoringly, even slavishly, at a new Winnie, mayhap. Different minds, maybe, and dreams, but functioning in the same aspiring or despondent way. Ah, what is man, Sire, that thou art really mindful of him ?

But, pardon, for I am still ahead of my story.

I was talking of this encounter ! What a change for us, Winnie and myself I mean, from that day on ! For, decidedly this new contact with which he was so much taken was a blow of sorts to that very precious mental connexion between Winnie and myself. For friendship, even as love, is that way, you know. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And certainly here was another god, or goddess. And this goddess, or its mother at least, had means—much more than any with whom Winnie had been previously identified. For while I had seen the large office and staff, spelling after a fashion a quite comfortable income, he was now also reporting concerning the house in Jersey City as well as other houses and lands which this same mother of Rona as well as her aunt and another aunt somewhere else owned in the State of New Jersey and all of which were to come to this same Rona at the death of said relatives. And although, as I know, the said Rona was by no means anxious or waiting for her beloved and affectionate relatives to die, still she had confided all this, and to one who for all his philosophy and romanticizing, was still not above houses and lands, assuming that they came to one without too much bother and did not affect one's literary dreams and plans. More—by no means mercenary—for he created and gave always as much or more in joy or thought or aid than he received—still he was interested by this. And no doubt Rona was glad and hoped by way of material treasures as well as a very genuine adoration, as I came to know, to hold him. At least her subsequent actions will rather bear me out as to this, I think.

But hold ! Do not despair. I am getting on.

At this time Winnie went on to explain, and in a somewhat wistful and disturbed fashion, as I thought, that our own happy relations were by no means to be disturbed, let alone disrupted, by this new connexion. Ah no ! By no means.



By no means. For Rona already understood all. She really did. He had made it all perfectly plain how essential each was to the other. And, besides, was she not just too wise and considerate, as I would presently come to know, to wish to come between such a promising literary union? She was. Indeed, and truth to tell, she understood how perfect and helpful was this friendship between us. At best—and that was the thing which now among others he had returned to talk to me about—she wished only to share it, in the way that my wife shared it; to make a fourth; to be a help in any such way as she could. For had she not means? And what, as she had already said to him, did she wish to do with those but be happy in some small way? Help, if she could, to make others happy. (I am thinking now of how really sincere she must have been; how unfortunately for her, at least, sincere.) We must all meet at her house, and soon—(a grand inaugural dinner it should be)—and go somewhere together afterward—a beach, a mountain resort. Also, there were in her house, and entirely apart from the room already occupied by Winnie, two rooms and a bath, with excellent furniture, now vacant. They had been occupied by her father, dead these many years. Obviously, this was the suite with which Winnie was being enticed. But now he pointed it out as something which was to be at our disposal also, and at any time—rooms, meals, service, all. This was a little too much for ordinary consumption, but did it not sound well? It did. Very generous, indeed.

None the less and to our general dissatisfaction, I fear, it resulted in little more than a series of conferences between my wife and myself, as to the meaning of it all. Should we or should we not accept these very generous overtures with anything but caution? To be sure, I had seen the lady. It was really because of my visit and comments that all this had come about. None the less, was it not Winnie and not us—not even me—in whom Rona was really interested? And while she was charming and generous and this and that—and her attitude, and Winnie's also, suggestive of many and delightful social contacts later—was it really not the better part of common sense to wait or go slow and allow this relationship to develop more temperately and casually? We thought so.

For was there not, as yet, Winnie's wife and child figuring rather troublesome in the background? And Winnie himself almost a trifle too light, as even I thought at the time, in his apparent total and quite casual dismissal of the other relationship. And his wife's situation at the moment not exactly easy but difficult! I thought of that, too. Yet verily, here and now a most interesting and curious love match, which, as all love matches do, must prove more exclusive than inclusive; hence, best to be reticent, recessive, on guard against proving ourselves a nuisance. And so, as much of a genuine reserve as possible, only not so great a reserve as to prove wholly adequate against the persuasive influence and powers of Winnie. Indeed there was really no gainsaying him. A dinner engagement had to be accepted and after that a return dinner planned. Later there was a camping trip, followed by a joint week-end visit to one of the adjacent seaside resorts. For all this was during the summer following the spring in which I had encountered Rona.

But in the meantime, what a period of strenuous psychologizing on the part of all! For while Rona was charming as a person and generous to a fault where Winnie was concerned, still there was the usual difference of opinion that springs from or lies in the advantageous or disadvantageous viewpoint of the observer. For myself though I liked Rona well enough as a clever, diplomatic and attractive person who was naïvely interested in "literature" or "letters," or whatever might have been meant by her personal reaction to those words. Most certainly I had not as yet seen her as part and parcel of any broad and sensitive and colourful point of view such as that which distinguished Winnie. On the other hand, he seemed either to see or wish to see her almost wholly in this light. She was, as he described her, all of these things, and more. On the contrary, my wife, who certainly conceived of herself as bringing a sensitive and poetic view to this earthly picture, had instantly on meeting her decided that she was something less, much less indeed than was included in Winnie's picture. As usual, as she said to him and to me—yet with never anything much more than a friendly and so mild trace of criticism—Winnie was rhapsodizing. Rona was nice, surely; not beautiful by any means but attractive,

and certainly generous where he was concerned, but to us only on account of him and not otherwise. I might depend on that. For, despite all of Winnie's gay ravings about a platonic friendship disturbed by nothing so human as commonplace love or sex, and Rona's inclusive generosity which covered all of us—or would, and bordered on extravagance and even folly—still, as my wife said, Rona was concerned with Winnie—her love or infatuation for him, and so sex. My wife could tell, couldn't she? Besides, there was that other angle to the situation. Winnie's wife and child? We'd better be careful, that's what!

And, in consequence, no living in the same house, ever. Just visits and now and again theatre parties and what not else. But with constantly more than troubled thoughts on my part as to the outcome of all this. For try as I might, and in the face of all of Winnie's managerial optimism (for that was about all that his raving came to), I could not feel that the thing was working satisfactorily. Was a man (myself, no less) to contest with a woman (Rona) for the possession of a second man's (Winnie's) affections? Yet, in another sense no contest or rivalry on my part. For I cared not at all how intimate, affectionately and sensually, Rona and Winnie might become, so long as the intellectual companionship which had distinguished our personal and literary relationship remained the same. But would it? Could it? From the first I observed consciousness on Rona's part of the strong and binding mental as well as emotional chemism which drew Winnie and me together—a union not likely to be even partially, let alone wholly, affected by any influence which her regard for him or his for her might bring to bear. He might do this or that for the time being—think he had gone from me for ever, quarrel with me, even hate me a little for a time—but never, never would he cease to care. We both intuitively knew that and from the first. It was the thing that was never flatly picturized or characterized by either of us, yet was always present, as real as any floor or door; in short, the absolute thing out of which floors and doors are made and from which primarily they take their rise. And it was the jeopardy of this relationship which was now causing this thought and worry.

But because of my affection for Winnie, I let myself believe his many assurances. More, because of Rona's technical or commercial aid, henceforward to be furnished for next to nothing—speedy and endless retypes, if need be—we were to work faster and so accomplish more. Lastly, and regardless of my doubts and reservations in regard to Rona and Winnie's proffered hospitalities, there was constant entertainment, chiefly at her place. For, as I found, hers was truly an agreeable home. Her father, as it appeared, had been a colonel in a New York regiment during the Civil War—a dashing and captivating person; one who, as Rona told us, knew not a little about law and literature. His grandfather before him had been an officer in the American Rebellion. In fact, the whole place smacked of tradition and means. And Rona and her mother and aunt were really very presentable people, soft-spoken and self-effacing. True, the mother and aunt were, as Rona laughingly explained, profoundly immersed in the mysticism of the Catholic Church. But she was not. Rather, and like her father, she was, she said, the religious black sheep of the family. She had never been able to believe anything save that which appealed to her as reasonable. Worse, and which was why she was interested in Winnie, as she laughingly said, she had taken to books, realism, philosophy, art. Only for the sake of peace she went to church at times. But with her eye, gaiety, a good time. Her poor mother and aunt! And Father Dooley, the parish priest! Already he had given her up as a bad job. And her chief value to her mother and aunt, as she also explained, was that she understood business and could manage their affairs, and so they were content to resign all to her.

But between Rona and myself, and for all these newer days which involved my working with Winnie at her home as well as he at ours, dinners, week-ends—most of which Rona insisted on paying for—what a battle! It was not that I wished it. Actually, if Winnie had been able to make a choice it would have rested so without argument on my part. But there was everything to show that despite her sudden and strong affection for him and his desire to share her material and spiritual aid, he was still convinced that it was necessary for him to split his creative if not emotional life with me.

And since I could not be with him in Jersey City, except for a meagre portion of the time, he would come to me, and for days at a time when the work seemed pressing. And at such times, as far as I could gather, all he would do would be to leave a note, or after his departure call her up at her office and explain. At other times, being at her place, we two might lock ourselves in and the task being sharp refuse to desist until long after she had arrived. Sometimes, as was quite obvious from telephone conversations between them, she resented this. Sometimes she would try staying away a day or two herself, but would invariably capitulate and either wire or send a messenger with a note asking if she could not come up, or if we would not join her for dinner. And sometimes, to save her face, she would pretend that pressure of work necessitated her presence at the office late when well she knew she was making it possible for Winnie to depart without resort to subterfuge or indifference. And this she did with a gay smile.

Yet all the while Winnie's interest in Rona, as I had witnessed from the first, was a divided thing ; half, or more, practical ; the remainder a genial, platonic liking that could not be too much strained. For he was never highly sexed. Indeed in his interest in her and what she represented was actually included in so far as I could see what that same might mean to us—himself and me—(our joint relationship as struggling writers) in the way of pleasures and comforts. And so, for that reason as much as any, wishing to retain it. Intellectually, I am sure he was convinced that Rona was neither his nor my mental or emotional equal—merely one who gathered a sense of some of the phases of him—and who was haunted by a mad desire to be above all things made into something—anything—which he might choose to make of her as long as it was his ideal. Her greatest value to him, as I saw, and knew that she knew also, lay in her money and her sensible and practical use of the same in his behalf.

On the other hand—and with what pangs I have often wondered !—he must have considered the spareness of the prospect for himself and myself alone—apart, that is, from Rona. For personally and with how little profit I was busy with a type of thing that was not destined to sell soon. Not

only that, but in so far as our joint work was concerned I was inclined to drive, whereas Winnie, and especially now, was drawn to a more leisurely pace. Why not? Rona had means. She was constantly talking of and urging all toward this and that leisurely thing—week-ends or vacations at the sea or in the mountains; amusing trips for Winnie and us even though at times she could join us but for a part of the time. What difference—be it summer or fall! Why not gather pleasure while we might.

Yet even so, I then felt, and still feel, that Rona was amply repaid by even the partial presence and affable gaiety of so charming a dreamer and poet. For where could she have found his like—the joy of being near him, hearing him talk, seeing him smile. Or when? Ah, the beauty of his head, as she once exclaimed in my presence! The water-blue clearness of his eyes! The cherub-like pinkness of his cheeks and lips! And for all these, his profound philosophic cogitations and his optimism, which later would have done credit to Plato himself, and with which he could dissolve one's darkest moods. Veritably, a hypnotist that youth—one who by reason of the melody of his voice, the colour and music of his fancy, incantated and lulled to dreams, to impossibilities and difficulties, really. Tragedies also. For surely, surely, as in the case of Shelley himself, his gay path lay among tragedies—for others.

I recall now, and with honest sympathy, Rona's troubled attempts to make the best of the situation. For quite all her efforts at that time and later seemed bent on seducing him with the prospect of perpetual comfort and even luxury. She was even determined now to do something for his wife and child, thus seeking, as I saw it, to bind Winnie to her in that way. So presently a proposal and a very liberal one. Why should he not let her bring the child on and send her to school; assist his wife with a small allowance maybe—two propositions which when first made were most promptly rejected, although later, if I recall aright, accepted—at any rate, some aid given. Again, as I soon noted, he was now wearing new suits, new shoes, and a new hat, and all far better than any I had previously seen him indulge in. I drew my own conclusions.

However, having lapsed into this situation and being now

confronted by this new dilemma, and having neither the wish nor the will to interrupt either of these relationships, Winnie was put to it to think of some device for keeping us all together. And this, as the first winter passed and a second spring drew near, he eventually found. For there were, as he one day suddenly announced—and with that gay air of finality which so brightly coloured so many of his announcements or suggestions—so many places by the sea or in the mountains not far from New York where, did the four of us but choose—(only Rona being so busy here could not participate much)—all might go presently and enjoy such wondrous delights the while we worked and worked as before. Only, as I now most ruefully recalled, we had not, since Rona arrived, done so much work as before. Worse, Rona, as usual, was prepared to pay for it all and that was a little too much. For myself I refused at once. But then there was himself and Rona still to deal with. They had talked it all over. It was all so simple. She was either going to rent or build a cabin somewhere. And could I refuse that? Verily both of us were dreaming of doing each a novel at the time. And where, under what more ideal conditions could we be united in work? The proposition was really too ideal to reject especially when he and Rona so much desired it. Ruefully I scratched my head. For how often had I longed for a place by the sea. And now—well, whisper to a starveling of Grub Street of the mountains or the sea in summer, and note how difficult it is to extract a negative. The thing had an enormous romantic appeal.

Worse, early in the ensuing spring, he announced to me that he and Rona had at last found an island off the coast of Connecticut, at or near the east end of Fisher's Island. The truth was, of course, that Rona, through her own efforts, yet at his instigation, had found this small island belonging to a millionaire cotton manufacturer and had leased it for a period of years. Also he and Rona, as he now stated, had already arranged with a local contractor to build a small cabin, the details of which he there and then submitted to me for approval. And another day, only some weeks later, he came to tell me that the place was actually ready and that he and I were to go and occupy it. Rona could come up only every second or third Saturday at most for a week-end. For the rest of

the time we were to have it all to ourselves. And how beautiful I would find it to be ! A heaven ! A paradise ! Ah, wait ! We could loaf, sail, work, dream, lie in a hammock, or sit in a comfortable chair and watch a world of sea traffic go by. Heigh-ho, the gulls ! The little sailboats ! Ah, the cool breezes ! The wonderful views ! How could I think of not coming to such a place ?

None the less, I was dubious. And the base of my criticism was that all of this smacked of parasitism. How could he, I, my wife, so freely accept of this and that and make no adequate, or even inadequate, return ? And not only that but Rona did not like me, and he as well as I knew it. How could she when I was really rivalling her in his affections ? More, had she not really prepared this place for him and her ? It would never end right. Nevertheless, he insisted that I was all wrong. Rona did like me well enough. It was only of himself and his interest in me that she was jealous. But that would wear off. Time would smooth out all wrinkles. She would come to understand how necessary we were to each other in our work. We must be more diplomatic. He would be, and I would be.

Accordingly, all things being arranged and Rona not being able to come for three weeks, or my wife either (a trip west debarring her), I finally journeyed to this place and found a veritable dreamland—blue sea, gulls, sails, ships, the comfort and luxuries of a little island cabin, such as wicker chairs ; a wooden swing on the rocks outside ; a rowboat ; a fourteen-foot “sharpie” ; and a lovely sandy beach on the lee or still side of the island where one could bathe. And on the other the great Sound steamers and all Sound shipping passing within a mile or two of our door.

The days and nights when in wind and storm the waves gnawed fiercely at the rocks, pounded and thundered below our very window. The misty, foggy nights, when as in a shroud this lone, small island lay severed from the world. One could hear only the mourning bell of guide ships, the eerie horns of lighthouses—Race Rock, Fisher’s Island Light, Gull Island, Watch Hill. And yet at sunrise or sunset or noon of a fair day, how glorious the sea ! The waters once more dancing and gurgling in the light—the winds lightly



fingering the waves or one's cheeks or hair ; the clouds floating like lighter boats upon a more diaphanous sea. Only about the rocks about which the wavelets now played, a spar or prow or steering wheel of some small vessel, broken by the storm. And once, upon the very rocks below my window, the whole of a pilot's cabin, with the name of the vessel painted plain—*The Jessie Hale*.

But never at any time any cessation of the suggestion that the sea was the dangerous, deadly, deceiving thing that it was. Calm it might be as any inland pool, yet but a brief half-hour after and behold a thrashing and overcast world—dark rain clouds, fog, rain, hail, gigantic leaping billows that thwacked the rocks of this petty continent with mighty thwacks, flung spume and salt to the very windows. Sometimes I wondered whether, were it not for brush and boulder or a small wind-blown tree to which one might cling, might not one be blown completely to sea ? The house itself fortunately was firmly tethered by wire. But even so, these high winds and thrashing waves, especially at night, gave one a sharp sense of insecurity. As for Winnie, he seemed to take it all calmly and even joyously and sang of the Isles of Greece and the early adventurings of men.

Wonderful as it was, though, I could never say that I was wholly happy there, not even at peace at any time, with myself, however much I might be with Winnie or the sea. For where was the true owner of this ? In her office in New York, no less, or in her hot home in Jersey City. And why was I here ? Because Winnie—and not she—wished it. Because he wished to work with me and was satisfied that I wished to work with him though she paid. It was all very trying ! And the thought waves that then sped from New York to me there. I could feel them ! Yet when I talked of all this to Winnie, or sought to, he waved me aside. How little really I knew of Rona ; her warm, generous, self-sacrificing nature ! Besides, it was so absolutely true, as he and she had said, that her work at this time prevented her from leaving the city.

None the less, there were times when he appeared to be at work on long compositions which he dispatched to her. And later a day when some of the work we set out to do being done, she as well as my wife was urged to come. Only in

Rona's case there appeared to be a trace of diffidence, if you please. She could only come the first time for a week-end, or so she said, some business matters recalling her to the city. But a week or ten days later, and based on the success of the first venture, which went off gaily enough, she came for a visit of two weeks, which was ultimately lengthened to three.

Only throughout this second visit a subtle something on the part of all which seemed to suggest more than achieve restraint, although restraint there was. And the reason, as I meditated on it afterwards, an underlying floor of falsehood or self-deception which affected each and every relationship here and which could not possibly be adjusted, or altered even, because of temperamental differences as well as differences in objectives. Nevertheless, on the surface one might have imagined that here was as gay a group as might be. The bathing, fishing, boating, daydreaming that went on. The conversation, arguments, laughter; the preparation and clearing away of meals; the plans for going here and there; the mishaps and achievements. Perhaps a superficial flaw was a somewhat dubious, albeit pretentious, platonism between Winnie and Rona, which was intended to convey that no intimacies beyond those permissible between wholly affectionate friends were here afoot, nor would be until marriage had united them. Yet there were times when this seemed a rather thin veil behind which real intimacies were enjoyed.

Only what of it, I thought? I, for one, and this in spite of the jealousy that I knew Rona entertained toward me, was actually gladdened by the sight of them holding hands, or of him kissing her or smoothing her hair as her head lay between his knees. Yet, as I also noted, with a marked absence of that salt of desire and especially that intense avidity for exclusiveness which is the mark sterling of all true passion. No, it was not there. He did not enough wish to be alone with her. For whenever there was opportunity for his going off alone with her, it was most often his wish that we—more especially myself—accompany him. And for his sake, apparently, she would insist too. Whereupon I would feel that she was being ill-treated. For why should he wish to include me? Why not give more of himself to her or discard her entirely? There was something a little cruel about it.

Perhaps this was why, here more than elsewhere, I found myself liking Rona. A little too insistent at times, as to this and that, I thought ; a little garish and anon conscious of her especial property and largess as contrasted with our lack of means. Yet what of that ? There were times, of course, when I became annoyed by her too efficient or too business-like manipulation of the various material difficulties of life. We were to do this and that. Take this and that. Was there some trip or spot which we were thinking of taking or visiting ? Presto ! She would call Laura Trench, that ever-present assistant who lived with her—a kind of female fidus Achates or mental shadow—and to her would issue such commands and instructions as forthwith would insure all that was desired. It would have been pleasanter, as I often thought, to do with less and be free. Yet ever present was her wish to be generous. More because of her knowledge and ability to plan ahead everything went most smoothly and agreeably. At her order to Laura out would come wicker hampers of food, silverware, cutlery, dishes, a coffee or tea outfit, and always in charge of the female above mentioned, whose only fault was that she was by no means an attractive companion or equal. Yet Rona's whole point of view and nature, as I often thought at the time, might well have been such—she was really of such a liberal, kindly turn—as to require the privilege of ministering to others after this fashion. Who was I to say ? Therefore I could not help feeling sorry for her, at times. Actually, I could almost feel her wondering how it was that she had allowed herself to slip into this quite anomalous position. Who was I that I should so engage Winnie against her ? Why did I not drop out and leave Winnie ?

And had I been psychically free, I would have, sure enough, only I was not as yet, any more than she. And what detained me so long in this wretched position was that I knew, and how well, that Winnie needed me as much as I needed him or he her—even more. That I and not she was his mental salvation. I even fear that she knew that. Only for her as for me he was all light and colour—real charm and gaiety and so surcease from my darker temperament as perhaps also for hers. Yet to me these days she was always so outwardly

kind. And Winnie ever the same, poetic, dreamful, colourful—a persuasion to beauty and thought. One could not be near him and not find oneself afloat upon a glorious sea of fancy. Indeed it was as though his soul, like a spirit on wings of fancy, hovered only over what was lovely, entrancing, and avoided or was blind to that which was dark and sad.

And yet, in spite of, or rather because of, all this, and in the face of his fine plans and promises in regard to work, he was for the most part intolerant of the mere idea of it here. What, work here and now? “Oh, come, let’s not hurry this thing too much. You can’t do your very best unless you’re in the right mood for it. Suppose we think about it a little longer. There are some parts of this that we haven’t worked out in our minds yet.” And with this he would sweep away any fine force or resolution that up to that moment might have seized on him or me, and substitute therefor that *dolce far niente* that I might truthfully say was the dominating mood of his life. And presently, after some five weeks of life with him here—those precious inutile weeks as I see them now—I found that there was no getting him to work continuously at anything any more. Rather he would prefer to, and did, stretch himself on the sand or in a hammock or on a rock in the shade, and muse and dream over the lovely spectacle that the sea presented. And I, for my part, contemplating him here, was wont to conclude that nature or life, or something, should have immunized him against the necessity for toil—persuaded him to be satisfied with Rona alone, for instance.

On the other hand, though, when Rona was about, I could not always feel so about him. For hers was a nature that was by no means so enamoured of beauty as was his. On the contrary, it was beauty as represented by him, I think, that she saw and felt and no other. Most poignantly through him to her came felicity. This day hast thou transported me into Paradise! But how could he keep her there? Would she not stumble and fall from its crystal battlements if he so much as let loose her hand? I was sure of it. Hence that hunger in her eyes; that dread, hopeless yearning toward him. I saw it all so clearly and what actually it must come to. And I think that vaguely she felt that I saw this and hated

me for it. I, the snake in the garden. I, Mephistopheles, peering from behind the flowery and perfumed vines.

So after a time, a talk with Winnie in which I sought to impress upon him how unfair it all was. We were not working. Why should I not go my own way? But no—he would have none of it. Was I now going to desert him? Unkind! Unfair! O Lord, I once exclaimed to myself, what a mix-up! What a damned contrary interruption or conclusion to a lovely beginning of something!

And so I stayed, only to see a change in him in regard to Rona. He became, as I saw, more restless, dictatorial, less patient with her, and unhappy, or comparatively so. Once, when she was alone and as she thought unseen, I saw her crying. There was a question of sailing. Being in no way a good sailor, she often suggested that she would prefer to be on land. But did that rescue her from his demands? On the contrary, the wind might be rough, the waves slapping and tossing the small boat, but it would be on just such an occasion that he would relinquish his place at the tiller and request her to take the line and rudder. And with what painful results! For Rona, always interested in her personal appearance, her hair, scarf, skirt, hose, would stop to consider these, letting go, maybe, either tiller or guy line. Then about would go the boat, pitching or rolling helplessly, ourselves in imminent danger of being engulfed. And then Winnie's rage!

"Rona, you can't do that! What did I tell you? You mustn't let go of the tiller or the line either. This is no place for fixing your hair. Wait till we get on shore or until I take the tiller, can't you?"

And now, and to my surprise, his voice had the ring of the severe and exasperated instructor. No seeming interest in the pretty spectacle she presented.

I recall one summer's evening when we sailed over to Budge's Island, something over a mile or more away, using the fourteen-foot "sharpie," which was our only other conveyance apart from a rowboat. The leg-of-mutton sail was inclined to slip from its sockets and the rudder was not very soundly hung. The billows were racing and cresting, the boat's nose high in the wind. And Rona, as usual, had brought

along her collection of toilet articles as well as her bag upon a golden chain about her waist. And this in the face of constant reproof on the part of Winnie, who asked how was she to sail if she was not going to leave such nonsensical things at home. The answer was that she was sorry, she would be careful, though. And careful she was for a time, the boat speeding past the rocks at the end of the island and out into the channel at a rate that made the blood tingle. High masses of clouds were scudding overhead.

Presently, some little conversation having sprung up, Rona was forgetting the sail. Something about her trinkets had taken her attention, and she was pulling too tight. The boat was leaving its course.

"Rona!" called Winnie sharply. "Watch what you're doing!"

Shocked by this, instead of doing as directed she gave the sail a jerk, and the wind catching it behind threw the beam violently across our ducking heads. The rope was torn from her hands and we found ourselves washing sidewise over a cresting billow, a second one breaking over us. Fine, I thought—at this rate we shall all be in the water soon. Yet I felt sorry for her. And Rona felt sorry for herself, as anyone could see. She had sought vigorously to cling to the rope, which was the one thing she should not have done. The sail now flapped straight before the prow and we were lurching and rolling. I, being forward of the others, leaned out and sought to recover it while Winnie took an oar and sculled about until the sail swung within my reach. And then, the guy rope once more in Winnie's hand, he turned his attention to her.

"You little fool!" he fairly hissed. "Are you ever going to learn to sail?"

Her cheeks flushed and her eyes brightened. "I wish you wouldn't talk to me like that," she replied. And then more softly but with considerable determination: "You sail." Her mental state was really pathetic.

"No!" insisted Winnie, his voice rising to a high pitch. "You'll either sail this boat correctly or you'll never go out with me again."

Heigh-ho, I thought—big words from a man who owns

not a penny of all this, neither boat nor cabin nor island nor her either. But I looked aside, catching as I did the helpless glance in her eyes. And she bit her lips and resumed her work of trying to guide the boat. Only in doing so she first paused, as so often she had before—from sheer nervousness in this instance—to arrange her beloved trinkets in her lap so that they should be safe. And in so doing, again the guy line for a fraction of a second was drawn too tight, the rudder released. This so infuriated Winnie that he reached over and, seizing her free arm which was still trying to assemble the trinkets, and snatching all of them—purse, rouge box, eyebrow pencil, a small pad with a gold pencil, some small gilt bottles—threw them all into the sea—and without a protest from her.

And once ashore, she beat a hasty retreat, her face white. To his credit, after a time Winnie, as I could see, followed her and peace soon reigned. Her tears were dried, her smile as gay as ever. And later, at midnight, when, poetwise, he spread a pallet for himself out on one of the rocks, it was Rona who crept to him carrying a pretty silk coverlet. And there she lay near him, happy in part at least, you may be sure.

The same way with fishing. She would pretend that she liked to fish. Yet the flopping of the fish in the boat when caught, the necessity of baiting one's hook and extracting the same from the fish, which bloodied her hands, were all decidedly distasteful to her. In fact at times I used to marvel at the amount of open pretence she was willing to inject into this affair, her delight in being near him making up for all. But, all told, the general atmosphere was becoming not only distasteful but painful. In it no longer was the beauty we had all come for.

So now, in the face of this new attitude on Winnie's part and Rona's pursuant misery, I decided to go. What was the use? I was not spiritually happy here. Neither was Winnie. Neither was Rona. And no work accomplished either. And so, in spite of his protests and hers, I trumped up an excuse and returned to New York.

Yet with what thoughts! For certainly Winnie, for the time being anyhow—his financial condition being what it was—would not leave Rona, however much he might resent

her. And she, however much she might resent my presence on her own account or my going on his—his reactions in regard to her—would still do nothing unless some order or move of his compelled her so to do. In short, here was one of those amazing and literally anomalous situations which could be neither eased nor solved by even the wills, let alone the actions, of any or all of the individuals involved.

And so at last then the end of that. Winnie was soon returning to New York, he said—both he and Rona. And there were still all of those things we had agreed to do together. And they must be done. Yet they were never done. Rather I merely heard from him a few times. Would I not return? He (and Rona) wished to see me.

But I did not—went out of New York upon an assignment, or so I said. Whereupon taking umbrage, maybe—I am not sure—and resigning himself, I assume, to Rona, he ceased writing and I heard nothing more until late the ensuing fall, when he appeared to announce that he and Rona had married. He had thought it all over and had decided that he should so do. His wife—through Rona's aid, as I afterwards learned, she having gone west to see her—had secured a divorce. There had been a settlement—on Rona's part, of course. Now they were living in the old family home in Jersey City. And both he and Rona would be glad to see me. (I could scarcely restrain a smile at this.) And so far as I could gather, all was to be as before between us. There were the novels we had wanted to write together—each his own but with the other's encouragement. In addition, finances would not bother him so much now. And, by the same token, should I wish it, they need not bother me—at least for the period of writing the novel, or so he hinted.

But being sensitive as to that and still dubious of Rona and her feeling for me, I decided not. More, several visits to the new home convinced me of the wisdom of this. For although outwardly she was as friendly and urgent as ever, still behind a gay, smiling face was the mood which said that if I returned it would not be well for her. Winnie might not care for her so much. Why did I have to come? Why was he so determined to include me, when here she was? I felt rather than saw this, but gave no sign. Instead I pretended to agree



absolutely, thinking all the while how odd it was that this more or less indifferent mood on his part should at last have led to such sure social if not exactly mental cleavage between us. Never again were we likely to work together. She would not like that ; would prefer that it did not occur.

Yet for some time thereafter, and just the same, there were various desultory attempts on the part of Winnie and myself to function as co-authors. Days when he came to my place or I went to his. But always, always, that same note of fear as well as opposition on her part. I was seeking to take him from her. I was the lone corruptive fly in this otherwise perfect marital ointment. Only it was worse than that, as she really knew. For it was not I but Winnie or Life itself. And how was she to adjust that ? For, as I was beginning to see, his was a temperament, lovely as it might be in the brighter and more speculative aspects, which required some solidifying or driving energy to coalesce his various shifting moods into literary reality. Also, more and more as I worked with him, I was beginning to think that I could do better alone. He was, as I saw him now, too fanciful and too erratic. He could not and would not concentrate sufficiently. And since Rona would not like me now or ever, why bother ? He had made a world of his own. Rona had solved all his material problems for him and he did not really need me. And finally, sensing my mood as to this, I think, he finally decided to go his way, for the time being anyhow.

Then months of silence. This colourful connexion really over, as I thought—never to be resumed, I even grieved concerning it. The good old days ! All had been so idealistically valuable to me. Then chancing to meet in a street in New York one day that same young secretary and assistant manager to Rona who had been with us on various trips, I heard a story of changes in the spirit and business acumen and enthusiasm of her employer which interested me. True, Rona and Winnie were married. And this had proved a great satisfaction to Rona. She was very happy, even now, and would be, apparently, in the future, if only Winnie would behave himself. But here was the rub. He was too impractical and was constantly urging Rona to adventures which were in no way good for her. For instance, already and at

a great expense, and in spite of her mother's opposition, she was remodelling the old home in Jersey City in order to provide Winnie with a suitable studio. Also, they were tired of the island—Rona had never really liked it up there—and there was now instead a mountain lodge in the Catskills to which they repaired from time to time. And in addition they were now planning to enlarge and improve the grounds about this place, because it was not exactly as Winnie wished it.

"But how was it," I asked now, "that Winnie and she decided to marry so suddenly? I thought it more of a happy friendship than anything else."

"Happy friendship indeed!" she returned, with a quite noticeable sigh. "Happy friendship for him, perhaps. But not her. She was always in love with him and now she is the most changed person I ever saw. I never would have believed that anyone could change so. Anyone as strong and self-reliant as Rona was. She is so crazy about him that he rules her as though she were his slave. There isn't a single thing that he wants that she won't give him if she can. She would sell her mother's home in Jersey City and move away from there if her mother would let her, because he doesn't like it over there."

"But . . . love . . . you know," I interjected.

"Yes, love, to be sure. It certainly is," she went on. "Why, she used to be down to the office early and stayed late, every day, but now since they are married, and whenever they are here, she never gets down before ten and is ready to leave whenever he calls her. It isn't for myself that I'm talking, for I can get work anywhere, but to-day if it weren't for me and some of the other girls who have been with her for a long time, I don't know how things would be by now. After you left the island, you know, she stayed there for nearly six weeks, with only just telegrams and me going up there Saturday and Sunday to talk things over. And now he's getting her to invest in real estate in Newark, because he thinks he knows something about that."

I could feel that this girl was nursing certain grievances which centred about Winnie's dictatorial treatment of her. But the picture that interested me most was the one that she painted of Rona's life since Winnie had come into it. Once

a girl who was nearly all business, tending strictly to the affairs of her office, now she was almost entirely taken up with literary matters. Since her marriage, she had even come to dislike her business which once was everything to her, wishing even that she was out of it so that she might devote herself entirely to books. Nightly now, according to Laura, she was engaged in either listening or reading to Winnie from nine until midnight or later. Or taking down his stories in shorthand—anything that he might wish to dictate, particularly chapters of the novel on which now, as she explained, he was still attempting to concentrate.

The thought of his working on that first novel and possibly completing it while I merely fumbled at mine ! Ah !

Worse, for Rona, as Laura further explained, certain larger blocks of her business which formerly had come to her because of her personal solicitations and which she had retained by reason of the personal care she had been willing to give them, were now being allowed to fall into the clutches of rival agencies. In short, her business was now not nearly as large as it had been. Only this summer several of the girls had had to be laid off or let out, and still she was going ahead, saying that Winnie's novel was the great thing now and that she could look after her business later.

I marvelled.

But then nothing more of any import in connection with them until one late day of the following February, when Winnie himself appeared at my place with a portion of an uncompleted novel—about two-thirds, I should say. And saying that he had been hard at work all winter but as yet had not been able to complete it. Also, as he now frankly announced (and for which simplicity and directness, lack of literary pretence, one could not help liking him), he feared that it lacked inspiration in parts. Would I read it ? He would like my advice. Then finding that I also was still working on mine, he begged of me the privilege of looking at it. He would read it and give me his honest opinion. We might as well, and ought really, as he now phrased it, work together on these things. Why not ? We had always been the best of friends. Yet recalling the feeling that presumably still existed on Rona's part in regard to my supposed influence

over him, I hesitated, and said so. And then he announced that while it might be useless ever to attempt to straighten out the tangle (it was true that Rona was a little jealous of me and my interest for him and his for me), still why should we allow that to stand in our way? Did not our work come first?

At that moment, as always, I realized that I cared for him as much as ever, and always would. There was something here that transcended errors, moods, follies, either of our own or another's making. We could and should work together.

And so another effort, out of which at last came two novels, my first and his. But for the accomplishment of this secret meetings, daytime visits on his part to my place. Yet, and even now, as he sought to show, Rona was the kindest and best-intentioned person in the world, actually dying to be of genuine literary assistance to him; imaginative as well as practical, yet in so far as his work was concerned, not sufficiently close to his mood. He was sorry, but so it was. She could never really inspire him to those so necessary nuances and shadings which he must achieve. Yet so helpful in all minor ways, such as typing, transcribing dictation and the like. Besides, by now he was too affectionately grateful to her for all of the things she had done and was doing for him to ever let her lacks make any real difference. She was so generous, loving, sweet . . . Didn't I know how it was?

The following spring, though, because of new plans on his part, and before either completed book was published, he was off to the mountain lodge, built for him by Rona, some required improvements calling him. And why should I not come up? And this in the face of his knowing why. Only then, because of changing financial and literary conditions, I was compelled to go west and south. And more, later, because of the suppression of my own work and the unfavourable editorial criticism that followed, I fell upon hard psychologic as well as material lines and for a period was in no state to undertake any serious labour. Between-whiles, Winnie, because of new connections, drifted far away. For a time I heard from him not at all, and in a semi-neurotic mood grieved over those older and better days. Later, he having written and published several additional books, I heard of Rona as the wife of a probably rising author, one who finding herself

demeaned by the typewriting agency had given it over entirely. It had been resigned to Laura, who sought to retain Rona's interest by holding a few shares for her.

Also Rona and Winnie, having had so much artistic success, had retired to their mountain home, for a period at least. And Winnie was already working on another book—three in swift succession. In the meantime, as I often said to myself, what was I doing? Drifting? A failure?

As to his books—the novel, I may say, was a fairly interesting piece of realism, but as I saw it entirely out of his vein, too exaggerated realistically to be impressive. He could not see life as it was. Next was a colourful, though to me who knew him, obviously romantic, report of himself as a farmer and country gentleman—a successful farmer and country gentleman, making some thirty or forty acres of mountain farming land pay. But too full of things which did not quite articulate; too many unintended suggestions of failure or error to make it quite ring true. I wondered as to that. The third was a romantic and somewhat exotic study of his home life in the city with Rona and her relatives, bringing in many details of which I knew, but too cheerfully appreciative and appraising to be of any real value. The one thing in all these books that interested me was a graceful and appreciative picture of Rona as a wife and literary and artistic as well as practical helpmate, which, I felt, must have pleased her. In all she was shown as kind, intelligent, forbearing, gentle, and helpful as a critic. All of which she may have been. But were they really happy? I wondered. I could not quite believe it. And yet I was ready to believe that her very large generosity might eventually have changed him toward her.

Later, in New York, though, after an absence of a year or more, I encountered first Rona and then Laura Trench. Rona, whom I saw first and but for a moment, was as healthful as ever in appearance, but seemed nervous and worried. She and Winnie, as she recited, were still in the mountains in the summer; in New York in the winter. Rarely did they revisit the island. But her dear mother had died; the house in Jersey City had been sold; her old aunt had gone to a distant cousin. She and Winnie were but now planning a

trip through New England. But I must come and see them after they returned. She would tell Winnie and he would write and tell me when. Then she was gone. And all the while I had felt in her that same nervous and uncomfortable distrust of me that had characterized her from the first.

Then the following fall, but without any intermediate word from either Rona or Winnie, I came upon Laura again and at once possessed news of both. They had returned to their apartment in town. Central Park West, no less. Laura, on account of the business which Rona had resigned to her, was and had been in rather close touch with them. She it was who helped them get settled in their new place here as well as in the mountains and was still doing many things in connection with their life. But as a bearer of glad tidings, she was little more than a *crêpe hanger*.

Winnie as a gentleman farmer? Oh, my! Or Rona as a happy wife? Oh, what nonsense! Or, again, Winnie's temperament as an author! One should see—as well as hear! And Rona's tolerant and even humble endurance of him in that capacity!!! In short, according to Laura, Winnie was one of the worst of the genus gentleman farmer that it had ever been her lot to meet. If one could believe her—a young woman who had never much liked him but who was devoted to Rona—he was the “greenest” and at the same time the most zealous, persistent, domineering and dogmatic farmer that had ever set a silver-handled spade or a bevelled-edge hoe to the soil. And yet, by reason of Rona's coddling of him, he had set out to make a paradise of his own which should pay and pay well. Only it never had. And the nonsense as well as domineering of Rona that went with it! Why, it was a wonder she wasn't sick or dead! For, in the first place, this farm or country estate, as you will, had to be put in the most expensive order, Rona paying the bills—tools, stock, sheds, this and that bought and placed on land which was not any too good and had cost too much originally. Next, the farmers, builders, tradesmen, one and all, finding that they had an economic dunce on their hands, had proceeded to tell and sell him nearly anything that came into their heads. A cottage that should not have cost more than two thousand at that time—with all of the material's of which

it had been constructed to be found on the place—had cost seven. Implements which were useless to him because once he had them he was not interested to do the work they were intended for, or to supervise the work of others at the wages asked, had cost him a thousand or more—and a large sum for stock which he had bought and then had not troubled to care for.

Then there were men who worked or loafed for him. These, aided by other native workers, had dug him a well, a cellar, a spring house, built him a barn, a road, various fences, all of which were defective, and since he did not farm much, useless. His pigs and chickens had died of diseases, or been stolen. A cow had been chased by a dog and injured. He himself, in attempting to fell a tree, had cut it on the wrong side so that it had fallen and damaged one corner of the roof. And betimes, over a period of nearly four years, during which all this had happened, he had been attempting to write, only latterly (within the last year or two), he had been complaining that his farm duties interfered with his literary composition. And all this interspersed with trips to New York, the island, even once to a brother who had betaken himself to the apple country in Oregon and was developing orchards there and in connection with which Winnie was now developing an interest—and might even go out there, leaving the farm to fare as it might.

Ah, lucky Rona, I thought—at least you have someone who keeps you busy worrying and so diverts your attention from the futility of life itself!

Yet speaking for Rona, Laura was full of her troubles. For apart from all the above, it was plain by now that Winnie was insufferably bored with Rona and indirectly, if not directly, manifesting it in a thousand ways.

“If I didn’t know how much she cares for him, I couldn’t imagine her enduring it. Not Rona! She has always been too commanding herself.”

Also, as Laura saw it, Winnie had compelled Rona to share all his enthusiasms as they passed from one thing to another—farming, dairying, chicken raising, truck gardening. Equally he had compelled her to share the responsibility for every failure by insisting on her agreeing with him in everything

beforehand. And to prevent things from going to waste or ruin, she had been compelled to work, and work hard, looking after people and things in whom and which she was really not interested, but which, in view of his neglect, had to be looked after. And yet, if she ventured to say a word or utter a complaint, Winnie would fly into a rage or sink into a sulky and unresponsive mood, or leave and come to New York—which, as Laura, saw it, tortured her most of all. The horror of losing him ! It was ever present now.

For whisper ! There was a literary woman in the same apartment building in New York, of whom Rona was jealous. She was an actress betimes and had written a book. And with this woman, who was no more attractive than Rona, Winnie liked to dance and go to places. And once, and worst of all, Rona had found a letter which Winnie had written me and forgotten to mail, in which he referred to a meeting with me and work and about which she had never heard before. And that had made her bluer and darker than nearly anything else.

“Believe it or not,” she added, “the blackest thing in her life is you. For she still thinks that you influence Winnie against her in some way. I am sure she feels that if you had never been in his life, he would have cared for her more. You never liked her, she says, and you have made him feel that she isn’t worthy of him.”

I threw up my hands, for, as I have shown, I had no more intentional control over Winnie than I had over Sirius or Beltair. And now no longer any desire for such control. That was all dead. Besides, as I explained in the hope that it might come to Rona, was it not he who last had sought me out ? True enough, Laura admitted, but since Winnie was becoming restless again and I was once more in the city, she was becoming fearful of my influence. For, as Laura said, he talked of writing another book, and Rona feared he might return to me or possibly depart with the young actress.

By then, though, I was really weary of Winnie and his antics and intensely sorry for Rona, and I then and there determined not to see him again. And I did not for several years. But in the meantime, as I was eventually able to gather from various sources (Laura ; Winnie’s own brother, Donald, a successful organizer of an apple growers’ association



in the north-west ; as well as several friends who knew both Winnie and Rona), that a third, and as it eventually proved, final stage of this relationship had now set in. For it appeared later that just at the time when Winnie was becoming dissatisfied with his farm experiences as well as his literary unproductiveness and Rona, this brother of his had appeared on the scene with an interesting suggestion. What was Winnie really doing, he asked ? Nothing ! And yet, as he had long observed, Winnie had always possessed a most amazing faculty for persuading or cajoling other people to his way of thinking. Accordingly, why should he not enter upon this orchard formation labour with his brother ? Be a great financial promoter ? (A thing that must have fired Winnie's fancy.) Why not help to dispose of an immense tract in Oregon ? Be a magnate ? An apple magnate. There were millions in it !

And true to his temperament, Winnie was at once seized with the glory as well as the possibilities of this. Or, perhaps in it he saw a door to freedom—a different and more refreshing life. At any rate, another change for himself and Rona, as it proved. For now and at once, Winnie decided on her usefulness in connection with this adventure. She was to execute his financial dreams for him. And Rona, as I was quite able to guess for myself at the time, was quite ready and anxious to fall in with this. For would it not take Winnie from New York and so possibly all the ills that were there threatening her ? It did. Hence a swift removal to Oregon, followed by the building of a bungalow and the introduction of a car for their joint commercial and pleasure use, the developing and selling of these tracts requiring not a little transportation.

But, as I heard still later in connexion with all this, Rona, not so much Winnie, proved a real success. In short, some years later, it was Winnie's brother Donald who told me that from the first she it was who displayed exceedingly keen judgment as to tracts, methods of development and sale, and the technical conduct of the business. Only there were certain persons back east whom it was still necessary to persuade to invest, and it was in connexion with these that Winnie was to be used. For "persuasion," as his brother once said

to me, was his other name. And this it was that troubled Rona most, since now and frequently it was necessary for him to return to New York in order to dispose of certain tracts, while she must remain in the west. As a result, a new phase of the old misery. For back in New York was there not that literary woman? And all the other temptations of the great city? And their apartment in which Winnie lived while there?

The truth was, of course, that love, if it ever existed, was dead. Or, at any rate, the influence exerted by Rona's means which had so enticed the stripling without a dime. More, Winnie was now in touch with individuals of considerable means in New York, as I found and knew, for I ran into him once, in connexion with a group which centred about Glen Cove and Oyster Bay. Among them was much money, as represented by brokers, bankers and social idlers. Still more, as I soon gathered and even saw for myself, since I was out and around in those days, he was already in tow to a young and delightful widow of means who had just discovered him and thought him "marvellous," as indeed in many ways he was—especially when and where fortune appeared to be favouring him. At once, on re-encountering me, he outlined this new great venture of his. It was this, that—a sure road to fortune. Would I not make one with him? All I needed was money—which I did not know how to get. But how was Rona? I asked. Oh, Rona—— Oh, as fine as silk. Couldn't be better. Enormously interested in this new great thing, heart and soul. Had dropped all to go out there and further it, and when Rona was enticed by the practical side of anything, well, I knew Rona. . . . (Yes, I knew Rona. And Winnie.) And regardless of whether I had made a strike yet or not—as I hadn't—he would gladly let me in on the ground floor, set over ten or fifteen acres, if I would, and carry me as long as possible without charges, or so few that the thing would be easy, since soon these things would take care of themselves. But remembering Rona and her feeling toward me, I declined.

But the widow. She was so young, brisk, witty and attractive and good-natured. Poor Rona, I thought. Your life line runs in rough places. This woman, or girl, unless I am

a poor judge of powers and capacities, will rob you of Winnie and keep him, for she has a charm which is greater than yours—more means, a fixed social position, and entry to a group which Winnie will be only too happy to join. In fact, never did I see him more at home than upon the verandas and lawns of various Long Island homes to which, in quest of introductions and possibilities, he was escorted by his new-found favourite. As a matter of fact, I was a small part of this myself during that particular summer.

But here is the rest of the story as it was eventually told me by Winnie's brother. By then it appeared that neither Winnie nor Rona were in any way any longer connected with the Oregon development. Rather, owing to the young and charming widow, Winnie had long since deserted Rona, who had eventually granted him a divorce, and now he and the fair widow were living at Glen Cove at times, in New York or London at others. Only, as I now learned, this brother and Winnie had had not a few arguments in regard to all this. As a matter of fact, after Winnie had gone it was Donald's intention to come to New York and see Winnie and if possible, patch things up, for, as he stated, Rona's condition at the time was dreadful. She was all but destroyed. Only, as he soon found, the lady was extraordinarily beautiful and attractive. And besides, as Donald rather sadly argued, Winnie was not to blame, perhaps. He was enormously interested in and easily attracted by women, or rather a really clever woman, and he couldn't be shot for that, could he? Besides, Rona, as much as he admired and sympathized with her, was never the woman to hold Winnie. She was clever and practical but without any social *flair*, and she had found Winnie when he was much younger and when what she had had meant a great deal more to him than it possibly could to-day. As in the case of women, Winnie had always been curious about money and what it could do for him. But as sure as God made little green apples, he was not nearly as much interested in money as he was in women. And perhaps what interested him in a clever woman with money—since he had no talent for making or keeping money—was what that money would do for him *and the woman he was interested in*—the freedom it would give both to go, do, be, so long as

they were together, not otherwise. And when he left it was not money he took or wanted, but the freedom to better and make gayer his life and that of some other woman, the woman who chanced to fascinate him mentally at the time.

But now as to Rona, please ! What about her ?

Oh, yes, Rona. Poor Rona ! To be sure, a sad case that. A very sad case. For she was essentially or at heart a woman with conventional, if not exactly moral, ideas and one who looked upon love, if not marriage, as sacred. Being of Irish extraction, she was a good battler for what she thought was hers, or at least what she thought her capacities and fate should entitle her to. By the same token, a poor loser. Oh, yes, indeed, the Irish were that way sometimes. Worse, she was inordinately fond of Winnie, madly in love with him. Now, as he looked back on it, it was a wonder she had not taken her life at the time. And one day he thought she had. But that would come up a little later.

At any rate, I recalled, didn't I, the time when Winnie had come east and met this Mrs.—let us call her Angel. I must, because it was shortly after that Winnie wrote him that he had come up with me again. Well, at any rate, it was after that Winnie began to display a desire to stay on in New York. At once Rona became morose and dour, and Winnie at her request came back to Oregon for a little time. But soon asked to be returned to New York, since he had succeeded in interesting a number of people there and was selling not a few tracts. Besides, for a time at least, Rona had been pleased by his financial achievements. But having heard of or suspected the presence of Mrs. Angel, she was set on Winnie's return to Oregon. Or if not she would drop her very valuable work and go to him—a proposition which somehow conflicted with certain obligations which she, apart from Winnie, had undertaken in order to secure certain rights and privileges in the new organization for herself and Winnie. This brought about Winnie's return for a time.

But then, of course, arguments and quarrels. There was some question once of a missing letter which came to the office instead of his home—and was, so Donald thought, from Mrs. Angel. It might as well have been from the devil, he said. The quarrel concerning it lasted a month, Rona not

appearing at the office at all and Winnie showing every evidence of distress and absent-mindedness. He appeared almost incapable of any kind of work, and announced that Rona was in a bad way temperamentally, yet never explained how or why. Then one day he packed a bag and apparently regardless of Rona, departed for New York, whereupon she followed. There was then a partial or temporary adjustment of some kind, by reason of which both returned to Oregon and dwelt for a few months together in the apple region. And Winnie went to work in connexion with a San Francisco group.

But this was of short duration also. No go, as we say. Instead of returning at a certain time from San Francisco to Oregon he had gone direct to New York, dispatching from there a letter to Rona which seemed finally to convince her that do what she would she could no longer hold him, and so finally blowing up this western life. At the same time, Donald also received a letter from Winnie in which he confessed that he was in love, no longer interested in Rona, and while he might and would be willing to represent the corporation in New York, he would not return west nor would he again live with Rona. It was no use. Both were unhappy. Long before ever meeting Mrs. Angel, he had wished to be free, but being sorry for Rona and grateful for all she had done for him, had hung on. But now he was through. . . . He was sorry. Perhaps Rona would give him a divorce. It would be senseless for her not to. If not, then Reno. But, in the end, as Donald explained, Rona eventually acquiesced to divorce, after some six months of silence.

But in the end, what a dissipation of a dream, on Rona's part at least! For after Winnie's disappearance and the arrival of the aforesaid letter, a complete emotional if not physical or mental break on her part. She had been, as Donald said, in better spirits and working more industriously than ever after their temporary visit to New York and subsequent reunion. But then the letter, unknown of at first by Donald, followed by the sudden and unexplained abandonment on her part of her office and duties. No word to even her stenographers, who reported to Donald for instructions. And so a call on his part at her house. But no sound within. Until Winnie's letter he had even decided that she had gone to San

Francisco. Afterwards to New York. But the local ticket agent seemed to think not. And her car was still in the garage.

Then, after a week, a telephone call from her from the house. She had been there all the time. But ill. And would he come down? He went, only to look upon someone who, he said, had the appearance of wax. Yes, Winnie was gone. All was over between them. She knew that now and was not going to try any more. Rather, now, it was her single desire to be relieved of all further work in connexion with this venture. Her shares and the house and all connected with it, she wanted sold. She was going away and would not say where she was going. A local bank would take care of whatever matters the sale of her interests might develop. And thereafter—something over a week, if I recall him aright—she once more shut herself in her bungalow without further communication with him or anyone, until one day she was seen suddenly to depart.

But before all this, one illuminating, pathetic point. On the third or fourth day of her second silence, Donald said, having gone to her door one evening and repeatedly knocked without receiving an answer, he stood for a time meditating. And as he did so, so he said, there came to him, first quite softly, later more and more audibly, the sound of footsteps in a room on the second floor—Rona's and Winnie's bedroom, as he assumed. It held Winnie's books, desk, papers, trunks. And there she was walking for hours, he said, her steps quite audible to him from where he stood. To and fro! To and fro! Across the length or breadth of the old room!

"Those steps!" he commented, quite emphatically. "I never knew before how mournful and how meaningful a walk might be. They were like the footfalls of a ghost. For a long time after that I could scarcely bring myself to forgive Winnie, although I well know how little any of us are responsible for the temperaments which drive us to do as we do."

But now as to Winnie once more. I met him and his new wife from time to time in one smart quarter and another. And for a period of years at least he was as gay and optimistic as ever. Later, something else again—but let that be. At

last, as he then said, he had the right conditions. And we might do this and that. Write plays, for instance. I smiled to myself, although I knew one book he could have written. A minor part of it is here.

As for Rona. Once, fully three years after Winnie had left her, I learned from Donald that he had heard that she had taken refuge in a certain theosophic retreat in Southern California, where those very much battered by life and in need of solitude, mental as well as physical, sometimes seek escape from the world and its ills. (The Roman Catholic influence, you see.) Later, as many as seven years, chancing to look one day into a classified New York directory and under "Stenographers and Typists" for a given name, I came upon the following, the address that of a well-known office building in the Wall Street neighbourhood :

<p>MRS WINFIELD VLASTO Court Proceedings Law Stenography—Conventions Commercial Typing Mimeographing, Multigraphing</p>
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I could scarcely believe my eyes, or my deductions. And yet never after had I the heart to investigate.

But why not? Was it not the thing she had really liked to do?

But after ten years!

And with what memories!

IDA HAUCHAWOUT





## IDA HAUCHAWOUT

**S**HE is identified in my mind, and always will be somehow, with the rural setting in which I first saw her, a land, as it were, of milk and honey. When I think of her and the dreary, commonplace, brown farm-house, in a doorway of which I first saw her framed, and later of the wee but cleanly cabin in which at last I saw her lying at rest, I think of smooth green hills that rise in noble billows, of valleys so wide and deep that they could hold a thousand cottage farms, of trees globe-like from being left unharried by the winds, of cattle red and black and white, great herds dotting the hills, and of barns so huge that they looked more like great hangars for flying machines than storehouses for hay and grain. Yes, everywhere was plenty, rich fields of wheat and corn and rye and oats, with here and there specializing farmers who grew only tomatoes or corn or peas or ran dairies, men who somehow seemed to grow richer than the others.

And then I think of "Fred" Hauchawout, her father, a man who evidently so styled himself, for the name was painted in big black letters over the huge door of his great red barn. This Hauchawout was a rude, crude, bear-like soul, stocky, high booted, sandy-haired, grey-eyed and red-skinned, with as inhospitable a look as one might well conjure. Worse, he was clad always, on Sundays and every other day, so I heard, in brown overalls and jumper. In short, he was one of those dreadful tramping, labouring grubs who gather and gather and gather, sparing no least grain for pleasure by the way, and having so done, die and leave it all to children who have been alienated in youth and care no least whit whether their forbear is alive or dead, nor for anything save the goods which he has been able to amass. But in this latter sense Hauchawout was no huge success either. He was too limited in his ideas to do more than hide or reinvest in land or cattle or bank his moderate earnings at a low rate of interest. He was

quoted locally as living up to his assertion that "no enimel gets fet py me," and he was known far and wide for having the thinnest and boniest and hardest-worked horses and cows in the neighbourhood, from which he extracted the last ounce of labour and the last gill of milk.

He was the father of three sons and two daughters, so I was told, all of whom must have hated him ; those I knew did, anyhow. One of the sons, when first I wandered into the region, had already gone to the far west, after pausing to throw a pitchfork at his father and telling him to go to hell, or so the story went. Another, whom I knew quite well, being a neighbour of a relative of mine, had married after being "turned out," as he said, by "the old man" because he wouldn't work hard enough. And yet he was a good enough worker to take over and pay for, in seven years, a farm of forty acres of fertile land, also eventually to acquire an automobile, a contraption which his father denounced as a "loafer's buggy."

The third son, Samuel, had also left his father because of a quarrel over his very human desire to marry and make his own way. Latterly, because he was greedy like his father and hoped to obtain an undue share of the estate at his death, or so his relatives said, he had made friends with his father and thereafter exchanged such greetings and visits as two such peculiar souls might enjoy. They were always fighting, the second son told me, being friendly one month and not the next, moods and different interests dictating their volatile and varying approaches and recessions.

In addition, though, there were two daughters : Effie, a woman of twenty-nine or thirty, who at the age of twenty-one had run away to a nearby large city and found work in a laundry and had never returned, since her father would not let her have a beau ; and finally Ida, the subject of this sketch, whom I first saw when she was twenty-eight and who already showed the care and disappointment with which apparently her life had been freighted. For, besides being hard on "enimels," Hauchawout was hard on human beings and seemed to look upon them as mere machines like himself. It was said that he was up at dawn or earlier, with the first crow of the roosters, and the last to go to bed at night. Henry

Hauchawout, the son I knew best, once confessed to me that his father would "swear like hell" if all his children were not up within five minutes after he was. His wife, a worn and abused woman, had died at forty-three, and he had never married again, but not from loyalty. Did he not have Ida? He had no religion, of course, none other than the need of minding your own business and getting as much money as possible to bury away somewhere. And yet his children seemed not so hard; rather sentimental and human—reactions, no doubt, from the grinding atmosphere from which they had managed finally to extricate themselves.

But it is of Ida that I wish to speak—Ida, whom I first saw when my previously mentioned relative suggested that I go with him to find out if Hauchawout had any hay to sell. "You'll meet a character well worth the skill of any portrayer of fact," he added. It was Ida, however, who came to the door in answer to a loud "Hallo!" and I saw a woman prematurely old or overworked, drab and yet robust, a huge creature with small and rather nervous eyes, red sunburned face and hands, a small nose, and faded red hair done into a careless knot at the back of her head. At the request of my "in-law" to know where her father was, she pointed to the barn. "He just went out to feed the pigs," she added. We swung through a narrow gate and followed a well-fenced road to the barn, where just outside a great pen containing perhaps thirty pigs stood Hauchawout, a pail in each hand, his brown overalls stuck in his boots, gazing reflectively at his grunting property.

"Nice pigs, eh, Mr. Hauchawout?" commented my relative.

"Yes," he answered, with a marked accent, at the same time turning a quizzical and none too kindly eye upon me. "It's about time they go now. What they eat from now on makes me no money."

I glanced amusedly at my relative, but he was gazing politely at his host. "Any hay for sale, Mr. Hauchawout?"

"How much you t'ink you pay?" he asked cannily.

"Oh, whatever the market price is. Seventeen dollars, I hear."

"Not py me. What I got I keep at dat price. Hay vill

be vorth jüst five tollars more if dis vedder keeps up." He surveyed the dry green-blue landscape, untouched by rains for these several weeks past.

My relative smiled. "Very well. You're quite right, if you think it's going to stay dry. You wouldn't take eighteen a ton, I suppose?"

"No, nor twenty. I t'ink hay goes to twenty-two before October. Anyhow, vot I got I can use next vinter if I can't sell him."

I stared at this crude, vigorous, self-protective soul. His house and barn seemed to confirm all I had heard. The house was small, yellow, porchless, inhospitable, and the walks at the front and side worn and flowerless. A thin dog and some chickens were in the shade of one fair-sized tree that graced a corner. Several horses were browsing in the barn lot, for it was Sunday and the sectarian atmosphere of this region rather enforced a strict observance of the day. They were as thin as even moderate health would permit. But Hauchawout, standing vigorous and ruddy before his large, newly painted barn, showed where his heart was. There was no flaw in that structure. It was a fine big barn and held all the other things he so much treasured.

But it was about his daughter that my relative chose to speak as we drove away.

"There's a woman whose life has been ruined by that old razor-back," he reflected after volunteering various other details. "She's no beauty, and her chances were never very good, but he would never let anyone come near her, and now it's too late, I suppose. I often wonder why she hasn't run away, like her sister, also how she passes her time there with him. Just working all the time, I suppose. I doubt if he ever buys a newspaper. There was a story going the rounds here a few years ago about her and a farm-hand who worked for Hauchawout. Hauchawout caught him tapping at her shutter at two in the morning and beat him up with a hoe-handle. Whether there was anything between them or not no one knows. Anyway, she's been here ever since, and I doubt if anybody courts her now."

I neither saw nor heard of this family for a period of five

years, during which time I worked in other places. Then one summer, returning for a vacation, I learned that "the old man" had died and the property had been divided by law, no will having been left by him. The lorn Ida, after a service of thirty-two or three years in her father's behalf, cooking, sweeping, washing, ironing, feeding the animals, and helping her father to reap and pitch hay, had secured an equal fifth with the others, no more, a total of fifteen acres of land and two thousand dollars in cash. The land had already been leased on shares to her prosperous brother, the one with the automobile, and the cash placed out at interest. To eke out an existence, which was still apparently not much improved, Ida had gone to work, first as a laundress in a South Bixley (the county seat) laundry, at a later date as a canner of tomatoes in the summer canning season, and then as housekeeper in a well-to-do canner's family. She was reported by my host's wife as still husbandless, even loverless, though there was a rumour to the effect that now that she had property and money in the bank, she was being "set up to" by one Arlo Wilkens, a garrulous ne'er-do-well barber of Shrivertown, a drunken, roistering, but now rather exploded and *passé* person of fifty ; also one Henry Widdle, another ne'er-do-well of a somewhat more savoury character, since he was credited with having neither the strength nor courage to be drunken or roistering. He was the son of a local farmer who himself owned no land and worked that of others. With no education of any description, this son had wandered off some years before, trying here and there to sell trees for a nursery and failing utterly, as he himself told me, and then going to work in a furniture factory in Chicago, which was too hard for him ; and later wandering as far west as Colorado, where necessity compelled him to become a railroad hand for a time. ("I served my time on the Denver & Rio Grande," he used to say.) But finding this too hard also, he had quit, and returned to the comparative ease of his former life here, which had no doubt brightened by contrast. Once here again, he found life none too easy, but at the time I knew him he was earning a living by driving for a local contractor, that being "the easiest thing he could find," as a son of the relative aforementioned most uncharitably remarked.

While working in this region again for a summer under some trees that crowned a hill and close by a high road which crossed one slope of it, I was often made aware of this swain by the squeak of the wheels of his wagon as he hauled his loads of stone or sand or lumber in one direction or another. And later I came to know him, he being well known, as are most country people the one to the other in a region such as this. Occasionally as the two sons of my host worked in a field of potatoes alongside the hill on which I worked, I could see them hailing this man as he passed, he for some reason appealing to them as a source of idle amusement or entertainment. Hearing laughter once I ambled over and joined the group, the possibility of country-side news enticing me. He proved to be an aimless, unpivoted, chartless soul, drifting nowhere in particular and with no least conception of either the order or the thoroughgoing intellectual processes of life, and yet not wholly uninteresting to me. Why, I often wondered. In so far as I could see he picked only vaguely at or fumbled unintelligently with such phases and aspects of life as he encountered. He spoke persistently and yet indefinitely of the things he had seen in his travels—the mountains of the west, the plains of Texas, where he had tried to sell trees, the worth of this region in which he lived—and yet he could report only fragmentarily of anything he had ever seen. The mountains of Colorado were “purty high,” the scenery “purty fine in some places.” In Texas it had been hot and dry, “not so many trees in most places, but I couldn’t sell any.” The people he had met everywhere were little more than moving objects or figures in a dream. His mind seemed to blur almost everything he saw. If he registered any definite vital impression of any kind, in the past or the present, I could not come to know. And yet he was a suitor, as he once admitted to us via our jesting, for the hand of the much-buffed Ida; and, as I learned later in the same year, he did finally succeed in marrying her, thus worsting the aged and no doubt much more skilful Wilkens.

Still later in the same year, it was reported to me that they were building a small house or shack on Ida’s acres, and with her money, and would be in it before spring. They were working together, so the letter ran, with the carpenters, Widdle

hauling lumber and sand and brick and Ida working with hammer and nails. Still later I learned that they were comfortably housed, had a cow, some pigs and chickens, a horse and various implements, all furnished by Ida's capital, and that they were both working in the fields.

The thing that interested me was the fact that at last, after so many years, having secured a man, even of so shambling a character as Widdle, the fair Ida was prone to make a god of him. And what a god.

"Gee!" one of the sons commented to me once during my stay of a few weeks the following summer. "Widdle certainly has a cinch now. He don't need to work hard any more. Ida gets up in the morning and feeds the chickens and pigs and milks the cow and gets his breakfast while he lies in bed. He works in the field ploughing sometimes, but she ploughs, too."

"Yeah, I've seen her pitch hay into the barn from the wagon, just as she did for her father," added the second youth.

"Ah, but the difference, the difference!" mine host, the father of these same sons, was jocosely at pains to point out. "Then it was against her will and without the enabling power of love, while now——"

"Love's not gonna make hay any lighter," sagely observed one of his sons.

"No, nor ploughin' any easier. Aw, haw!" This from a farm-hand, a fixture about the place. "An' I've seen her doin' that, too."

"What treachery to romance!" I chided. And otherwise did my best to stand up for romance, come what might.

Be that as it may, Widdle was about these days in a cheerful and even facetious frame of mind. When first I knew him, as a teamster, he had seemed to wear a heavy and sad look, as though the mystery of life, or perhaps better, the struggle for existence, pressed on him as much as it does on any of us. But now that his fortune had improved, he was a trifle more spruce, not so much in clothes, which were the usual farmer wear, but in manner. On certain days, especially in the afternoon, when his home chores were not too onerous or his wife was taking care of them for him, he came visiting to my woodland table on its hill, where a great and beautiful



panorama spread before us. And once he inquired, though rather nibblish in his manner, as to the matter and manner of writing. Could a man make a living at that now, say? Did you have to write much or little in order to get along? Did I write for these here now magazines?

Rather ruefully I admitted that when I could I did. The way of ye humble scribe, as I tried to make plain, was at times thorny. Still, I had no great reason to complain.

We then drifted to the business of farming, and here, I confess, I felt myself to be on much firmer ground. How was he getting along? Had he made much out of his first season's crop? How was his second progressing? Did he find fifteen acres difficult to manage? Was his wife well?

To the last question he replied that she was, doing very well indeed, but as for the second from the last: "Not so very. 'Course now," he went on musingly, "we ain't got the best implements yet, an' my wife's health ain't as good this summer as 't was last, but we're gettin' along all right. I got mebbe as much as a hundred barrels o' potatas comin' along, an' mebbe three hundred bushels o' corn. For myself, I'm more interested in this here chicken business, if I could once git it agoin' right. 'Course we ain't got all the up-to-date things we need, but I'm calc'latin' that next year, if everything goes right, I'll add a new pen an' a coupla runways to the coop I got up there, an' try my hand at more chickens."

Never his wife's, I noticed, when it came to this end of the farming institution. And as an aside I could not help thinking of those breakfasts in bed and of his wife pitching hay and ploughing as well as milking the cow and feeding the chickens while he slept.

The lorn Ida and her great love!

And then one day, expressing curiosity as to this *ménage*, I was taken there to visit. The place looked comfortable enough—a small, unpainted, two-room affair, with a lean-to at the back for a kitchen, a porch added only the preceding spring, so that milord might have a view of the thymey valley below, with its green fields and distant hills, while he smoked and meditated. It was very clean, as I noticed even from a distance, the doorway and the paths and all. And all about it, at points equidistant from the kitchen, were built a barn,

a corn-crib, a smoke-house, and a chicken coop, to say nothing of a new well-top, all unpainted as yet but all framed by the delicious green of the lawn. And Widdle, once he came forward, commented rather shyly on his treasures, walking about with me the while and pointing them out.

"What with all the other things I gotta do, I ain't got 'round to paintin' yet ; but I 'low as how this comin' fall or spring mebbe I'll be able to do sumpin' on it, if my wife's health keeps up. These chickens are a sight o' bother at times, an' we're takin' on another cow next week an' some pigs."

I thought of those glum days when he was still hauling sand and stone in his squeaky wagon.

And then came Ida, big, bony, silent, diffident, red-tanned by sun and weather, to whom this narrow fifteen-acre world was no doubt a paradise. Love had at last come to her. Widdle, *le grand*, was its embodiment. I could not help gazing at him and then at her, for after a still, bovine fashion she seemed fond, and not only that, but respectful of him. He talked and talked, while she only spoke when addressed—never first or spontaneously. Her father's training, I thought.

It being a Sunday afternoon, the only appropriate time to make a call in the farming world, when presumably the chores of the week were out of the way, and Widdle having resumed his seat on his front porch, still she was astir among her pots and pans, though eventually she came forward and made us welcome in her shy way. Wouldn't we sit down ? Wouldn't we have a glass of milk ? The worthy Widdle, scarcely cognizant of her presence as it seemed to me, went on smoking and dreaming and surveying his possessions. If ever a man looked at ease, he did, and his wife seemed to take great satisfaction in his comfort. She smiled as we talked to him or answered in monosyllables when we addressed her, having been so long repressed by her father, as I assumed, that she could not talk.

But my relative had called my attention to one thing which I was to note, and that was that despite the fact that she was within three months of an accouchement, I would find her working as usual, which was true. She was obviously as near her day as that, and yet during our visit she went to look

after the pigs and chickens, the while milord smoked on and talked. His one theme was the farm, his proposed addition to his chicken coop, a proposed enlargement of his pig pen, the fact that his farm would be better if he could afford to take over some five acres to the east, which were to be had, and so on. Several times he referred to his tour of the west and the fact that he had "served his time on the Denver & Rio Grande."

After that I could not help thinking of him from time to time, for he illustrated to me so clearly the casual and accidental character of so many things in nature—the fact that fortune, strength, ease, beauty, fame, any power of mind or body, come in the main to the individual as gifts and are so often not even added to or developed by any effort of his. For here was this vague, casual weakling drawn back to this region by a kind of sixth sense which regulated his well-being, mayhap, and that after he had failed in all other things, only to find this repressed and yet now free victim, his wife, seeking, by the aid of her small means, some satisfaction in the world of love through him. But did he really care for her? I sometimes asked myself that question. Could he? Had he the capacity, the power of appreciation and understanding which any worthwhile love requires? I wondered.

The events of the following September seemed to answer the question in a rather definite way, and yet I am not so sure that they did, either. Life is so casual; love, or the matter of affinity, such an indefinite thing with so many! I was sleeping in a large room which faced the front of the house—a room which commanded the slope of a hill and a distant and splendid valley beyond. Outside were evergreens and horse-chestnuts that rustled and whispered in the slightest breeze. At two or three of the clock of one of those fine moonlit nights I heard a knocking below and a voice calling: "Oh, Mis' K——! Oh, Mis' K——!"

Fearing that my hostess might not hear, I went to one of the open windows, but as I did so the door below opened and I heard her voice and then Widdle's, though I could not make him out in the pale light. He seemed, for once, somewhat concerned, and asked if she would not come over and see his wife.

"She's been taken powerful bad all of a sudden, Mis' K——," I heard him say. "She ain't been feelin' well for the last few days ; been complainin' sorta, an' she's very bad now, an' I don't know what to do. It'd be a big favour if you'd come, Mis' K——. Mis' Agnew phoned fer a doctor fer me, but she don't seem to be able to get none yet."

So Ida's time had now come ! Another child—and of such parents—was about to enter the world—to be what ? Do what ? I wondered how the spinsterish Ida would make out. She was rather old now for motherhood, and so large and ungainly. How would she fare ? How serve a nursing child ? Not many minutes after I heard Mrs. K——, accompanied by one of her sons, leaving in the motor-car, the humanitarian and social aspects of the situation seeming to arouse in her the greatest solicitude. Then I heard nothing more until the following noon, when she returned. By that time Mrs. Widdle was very ill indeed. She had worked in the fields up to three days before, as it now appeared, and only the day before her illness had attempted to do a week's washing. No help of any kind had ever been called in, no doctor consulted. Widdle, conscious of himself only, as it appeared to me, had gone on dreaming, possibly doing his share of the work but no more, and no doubt accepting cheerfully the sacrifices and ministrations of his wife until this latest hour.

It was also evident to all that conditions underlying possible motherhood for Mrs. Widdle were most unsatisfactory. During all the nine months of gestation she had given herself no least attention. A doctor called in at this late hour by my relative wagged his head most dolefully. Perhaps she would come through all right, but there was undue pressure on the kidneys. He suggested a nurse, but this Mrs. Widdle, ill as she was, would not hear of. It would cost so much. The end came swiftly on the following night, and with great agony. She was in nowise fitted to endure the strain, and an attempt to remove the child, accompanied by uric poisoning, did for her completely. Ether was given, and she remained unconscious until she died. And the child with her.

I saw her once, and once only, afterward, when I joined

the family of my host and hostess in "viewing the body." Widdle, as I had long since learned, was in no great standing with either his relatives or his neighbours, being of that poor, drifting, dreaming calibre which offers no least foundation for a friendship, let alone a community of interest with either. Usually he was silent or slow of speech, with but a few ideas and those mostly relative to his present state upon which to meditate or speak. Consequently, few neighbours and no relatives, barring Ida's two brothers, were interested to call, and the latter in only the most perfunctory way. Such as did come or had offered assistance had arranged that the parlour, a most sacred place, should be devoted to the last ceremonies and the reception of visitors ; and here the body, in a coffin, the like of which for colour and decoration I had never seen before, lay in state. It was of lavender plush on the outside and lined with pink silk within, and to be carried, as one was forced to note, by six expensive handles of gilt. More, this parlour was obviously an æsthetic realm as these two had seen it, and hence arresting to anyone's attention. For it was furnished with a gaudy yellow oak centre table, now pushed to one side, some stiff and homely chairs with red plush seats, and a parlour wood-stove decorated with nickel and with red isinglass windows in front. On the walls, which were papered a bright pink, were two yarn mottoes handsomely framed in walnut, a picture of Widdle and his wife boxed in walnut and glass and surrounded by a wax wreath, and, for sharp contrast, a brightly coloured calendar exhibiting a blonde movie queen rampant. Gracing the centre table was a Bible and a yellow plush album, in which was not a single picture, for I looked. It must have been the yellow plush that had fascinated them, that ancient and honourable symbol of luxury.

But that coffin ! I have no desire to intrude levity in connexion with death, and, anyhow, it is said to presage misfortune. Also, I recognize too well the formless and untutored impulses toward beauty which struggles all too feebly in the most of us, animals and men. Out of such undoubtedly have risen Karnak and the Acropolis and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn." But at that time, and for all I know the custom may endure to this hour, there was being introduced, to the poorest sections of our American big cities, and from this experience I judged

to the backwoods also, this concluding gaiety in the matter of coffins calculated to engage the attention of any lover of colour—in short, astonishing confections in yellow, blue, green, silver, and lavender plush, usually lined with contrasting shades of silk and equipped with handles of equally arresting hues—silver, gilt, black, or grey. Trust our American profiteer Barnums of the undertaking world to prepare something that would interest the afflicted simple, if not the dead, in their hour of bereavement. Beauty, as each interprets it for himself, must certainly be the anodyne that resolves all our pains. At any rate, this coffin, as described, was piled high with garden flowers. And as I learned afterwards an attempt at mortuary verse by Widdle, concerning which more anon, was placed in one of his dead wife's hands. But considering the general solidity and angularity of the frame it held, it could not but seem incongruous. Astonishing, in fact. Yet the coffin obviously selected for its beauty and as a special comfort to the bereaved living, the Honourable Henry Widdle. Indeed, unless I am greatly mistaken, Widdle was for the first time in his life indulging in a long repressed impulse toward luxury, which in its turn was disguising itself to him as deep grief.

But that figure in the coffin, the lorn Ida, no less, only now embedded in such voluptuous materiality and at so late a date—she who had followed the plough and pitched hay, and then, as a reward, had enjoyed one toiling, closing year of love or peace, or what you will! That hair so thick and coarse, but now smoothly plaited and laid—red hair. The large, bony head, with wide mouth and small nose, looking so tired. But none the less one strong arm snugly holding the minute infant that had never known life, close to her breast and her big, yearning face, the other, the hand of the same—Widdle's poem.

I turned away, arrested, humiliated, even terrified by this fresh evidence of the blank and humourless clanking of the cosmic urge that had brought about not only this, but so much that is inane or miserable or horrifying on this planet. For Ida's face showed lines which stilled all humour. They were not comic and not even sad, just fatefully mechanistic and so unbelievably grim. Sleep, I thought, sleep! It is best.

But the little house she had left, that little shell in which she had thought to entrench herself against misery and loneliness. Not a corner or a window or a shelf or a pan but had been scrubbed and shined and dusted repeatedly. The kitchen revealed a collection of utensils almost irritatingly clean ; the dining-living room the same. And outside were all the things as she had left them, all in clean and orderly array. And on the front porch, viewing the scenery and greeting the few straggling visitors, Widdle himself in almost smiling serenity. For was he not now master of all he surveyed, the fifteen acres, house, barn, sheds, cattle—a man of affairs, no less ? And now for this great occasion in his best clothes, and looking for all the world as though he were holding a reception or conducting a function of some kind, the importance of which had been solemnly impressed upon his mind.

What interested me most, though, after seeing this other, was his attitude, the way in which he now faced death and this material as well as spiritual loss, also his attitude toward the future, now that this brief solution of most of his material difficulties had been removed. Anyone who postulates the mechanical or chemical origin of life, and behaviourism as the path of its development, would have been interested in this case. As I viewed Widdle then, he was really nothing more than a weak reflection of all the customs or emotional or mental mechanics of his day and realm. It was customary on such occasions to wear black, and he wore black, as much as he could find. He had heard or seen that funerals were occasions of state, hence this coffin, with such other evidences of grandeur as he could contrive, introduced into this meagre home. He had noted that people grieved, so now he drew a long face and wore as sad a mien as he could muster, but not, I am sorry to report, a successful one.

And when, after due comments on the pathos of his great loss, I asked about his future, he showed a strong, if repressed, interest in the fact that all this which had been his wife's was now his, assuming that no undue wind arose to disturb him. Not only that but for some reason, due to no conscious effort on my part, he assumed that I was friendly to him and wished him well, and in consequence, not five minutes after I had come out of the house, he wished to know if I had seen the

barn. I replied that I had not and expressed interest, and he took me to see it, solemnly and slowly, cortège style. But once there, his spirit seemed to expand or "limber up," as he would have said, and he then and there talked of the future that was his. The one horse he had there was good enough, but now that he was alone and might need to hire occasional help, he was thinking of buying another. Besides, his wife had helped him a good bit, and so he wasn't sure but that he would require the aid of a "hand"—become an employer, no less. Next came the pigs, which we examined with care. His wife had thought that four were enough for this fall, but next year, if his crops turned out right, he might try six or eight. There was money in the dairy business, too, if only a man had three or four cows; but there was a lot of trouble connected with feeding, milking, calving, and the like, and he wasn't sure that he understood this as well as had his wife. Did I know anything about the law governing a wife's property or her husband's just claim to it? I confessed that I did not but would be glad to inquire, if he wished, which he did.

"You know," he said, leaning against one of the posts of the pig pen, "my wife's relations ain't any too friendly to me, for some reason. I never could make it out, an' I was thinkin' mebbe they'd feel they have a claim on this, though when we bought she wouldn't have it any other way but joint. 'Squire,' she says to Squire Driggs over to Shrivertown, when she was havin' the property transferred to the two of us when we got married, 'I want this property fixed so that in case anything happens to either of us the other one gets it, money an' all.' That's what she said, an' that's what both of us signed on to over there to Shrivertown. I got the papers in the house here now. That's clear enough, ain't it? I'd like to bring the papers in to you sometime an' let you look at 'em. There ain't no way they could interfere with that, is there, do you think?"

I thought not, and said so. More, that I would see what a lawyer friend of mine would have to say since he appeared much perturbed. Indeed he seemed slightly strained when he first spoke but now became more calm. Then he led me to the chicken coop and the milk-house. We stood at a fence and looked over that five-acre field adjoining which some day



he hoped to own. After a few more comments as to the merits of the departed I left, and saw him but once after, some two weeks later, when, the funeral being over and the first fresh misery of his grief having passed, he came up to my table on the hill-top one sunny afternoon to spend a social moment or two, as I thought, but really to discuss the latter phases of his position as master and widower.

The afternoon was so fine. A sea of crystal light bathed the hills and valleys, and where I worked the ground was mottled with light sifting through leaves. Birds sang, and two woodchucks, bitten by curiosity, reconnoitred my realm. Then the brush crackled, and forward came Widdle out of nowhere and sidling slightly as he came.

"Nice view you have up here."

"Yes, I enjoy it very much. Have that stump over there. How've you been?"

"Oh, pretty fair, thank you. I was thinkin' you might like to look over them papers I spoke about. I have 'em here now." And he fished in his coat pocket.

I turned over the one paper he extracted, which was a memorandum to the effect that Ida Widdle, *née* Hauchawout, sole owner of such-and-such property, desired and hereby agreed that in the event of her death and the absence of any children, her husband, Henry Widdle, was to succeed her as sole owner and administrator. And this was witnessed by Notary Driggs of Shrivertown.

"There's no question in my mind as to the validity of that," I solemnly assured him. "It seems to me that a lawyer could make it very difficult for anyone to disturb you in your place. I can make a copy of it and find out. But why not see a lawyer? Or ask Justice Driggs?"

"Well," he said, turning his head slowly and as slowly taking the paper. "I don't like to go to any lawyer around here unless I have to, nor no judge, either. They charge a lot. Besides, I'm afraid of 'em. They could make a lot o' trouble for a feller like me, not knowin' anything about these here things. But I don't calc'late to do nothin' about this unless I have to, not stir anything up, that is, but I thought you might know."

I stopped my work and meditated on his fate and how well chance had dealt with him in one way and another. Also his native shrewdness in regard to how he was to do. Lawyers, as he plainly saw, were dangerous. Judges and relatives also. After a time, during which it seemed to me that he might be thinking of the misused Ida, he searched in his pockets and finally extracted another paper, which I thought might be another agreement of some kind. This he held in his hands for a minute or more, then unfolding it very carefully, said: "You bein' a writer, I thought I'd bring up a little thing I've fixed up here about my wife an' ask you what you thought of it. It's what I put into her hand in the coffin. Course I've worked over it some since then. It's some poetry I've been thinkin' I'd put in *The Banner* over here to Bixley."

"The poetry laid in his dead wife's hand," I thought. Both my host and hostess had stated that an effusion had been placed there by Widdle and that presently—in some due and respectable hour—they would obtain the loan of it for my inspection. But now here it was before ever they had thought to secure it, and I could scarcely repress my curiosity as to the nature of this composition which was to be published, at his request, presumably, by *The Banner*.

"How do you mean, publish?" I inquired respectfully, and yet holding out my hand. "Suppose you let me see it."

"If you don't mind, I'd rather read it to you. It's in my writin' an' kind o' mixed up, but I can read it to you."

"By all means. But tell me something about it first. You say it's a poem about your wife. Did you compose it yourself?"

"Oh, yes. Only yesterday an' last night. Well, mebbe three days, countin' the time I put on it just after my wife died. Only I put the beginnin's of it in her coffin the day she was buried."

"Oh, I see," I commented. "Very good and thoughtful. And now you say it's going to be published in *The Banner*?"

"Yes, sir. That's where it's a-goin' to be published."

"But just how is that? Do you submit it, or how?"

"Oh, they always print death-rhymes," he went on in his slow, explanatory way. "They charge ten cents a line. Everybody does it when anybody they're fond of dies—husband or wife or the like o' that."

"Oh, I see," I hazarded, a great light dawning. "It's a custom, and you feel in a way that you ought to do this."

"Yes, sir, that's it. If it don't cost too much, I thought I'd just put this in."

I prepared to give the matter attentive ear.

"Read it," I said, and he smoothed out the paper, the slanting afternoon light falling over him and it, and began :

"Dearest wife who now are dead,  
I miss you as in the days before we were wed,  
Gone is your kind touch, your loving care.  
I look around, but can't find you anywhere.

"The kind deeds that you scattered far and wide  
Tell me that you are no longer by my side.  
I look around now and seek you in vain ;  
My tears they fall like rain.

"The house is silent without your dear tread,  
Everywhere that you were you are now missed instead.  
I am lonely now, but our Father above  
Now has you in His care and love.

"If gone from me you are happy there at rest,  
And death that tortures me for you is best.  
Dear husband, weep not for your departed wife,  
For from heaven, looking down, I see you as in Life.

"I see your woe and grief and misery,  
And would be there with you if I could in glee,  
So kind you were, dear husband, and so good,  
The Father of All above knows what you've withstood ;  
He knows how hard you've tried, what efforts you have made,  
To help and serve in love. Don't be afraid.

"Face the world with courage, husband dear,  
And never have any fear.  
For if in life you may now be misunderstood,  
Our Father who is in heaven knows that you were kind and good.

"Your efforts were very many, your rewards were few.  
The world should know how kind you were and true.  
The tongues of men may slander, husband dear,  
But do not let that trouble your ear.

"I, your wife in heaven, know how we  
While we were together on earth did love and agree,  
And in heaven, too, when it pleases God to call us,  
We will love and be happy together as we did on earth always."

He paused and looked up, and I confess that by now my mouth had opened a little. The simplicity ! The naïve unconsciousness of possible ridicule, of anachronism, of false interpretation on the part of those who could not know ! Could a mind be so obtuse as to believe that this was not ridiculous ? I stared while he gazed, waiting for some favourable comment.

"Tell me," I managed at last, "did you write all of that yourself ?"

"Well, you know how 'tis," he proceeded to explain. "The papers round here publish these here things right along, every week, that is. I see 'em in *The Banner*, an' I just took some of the lines from them, but a good many of 'em—most really—is my own."

"Very good," I said encouragingly. "Excellent. But you know you have quite a few lines there. At ten cents a line you are going to have a big bill to pay."

"That's so," he agreed, dubiously and ruefully, at the same time scratching his head. "I hadn't thought o' that. Let's see," and he began to count. "Three dollars and forty cents," he finally announced and then fell silent.

Aha, I thought, the frailty of these earthly affections ! For, looking at him as he counted up the cost of his poetic flight and thinking of his wife—the dreary round of her days, the heavy labour up to the very hour of her death, that carefully enacted agreement as to the ultimate disposition of her property in case of her death, I could not help thinking of the pathos and futility of her as well as his life—of so much that we call life and effort, the absolute nonsense that living becomes in so many instances. Above me as I speculated was that great blazing ball we call the sun, spinning about in space and with its attendant planets. And upon the surface of this thing, "the earth," we, with our millions of little things we call "homes" and "possessions." And about and above and beneath us, immensities as well as mysteries, mysteries, mysteries.

And nowhere on all the earth, not even so much as a sane guess as to what we are or what the sun is or the "reason" for our being here. And yet, passion and lust and beauty and greed and yearning, this endless pother and bitterness and delight in order to retain this elusive and inexplicable something, "life," "us," "ours," in space. Birds a-wing, trees blowing and whispering, fields teeming with mysterious and yet needed things, and then, on every hand this wealth of tragedy. Life living on life, men and animals plotting and scheming as though there were only so much to be had and all of that in the possession of others.

And yet, despite the mystery and the suffering and the bitterness, here was this golden day, an enormous treasure in itself, and these lovely trees, these mountains blue, this wondrous, soothing panorama. Beauty, beauty, beauty, appealing and consoling to the heart—life's anodyne. And here, in the very heart of it, Ida Hauchawout, and her father, with his "no enimel gets fet py me," and his son who threw a pitchfork at him, and this poor clown before me with his death-rhymes now apparently too expensive and his fear of losing the little that had been left to him. *His* love. *His* loss. *His* gain. *His* desire to place *himself* right before the "world." Ha, ha! Ho, ho! This was what he was rhyming about. This was what he was worrying about.

But was he guilty of any wrong before the world? Not a bit that I could see. Was he entitled to what he had come by? As much as any of us are entitled to anything. Yet here he was, worrying, worrying, worrying, and trying to decide in the face of his loss or gain whether his verse, this tribute or self-justification, was worth three dollars and forty cents to him as a display in a miserable, meagrely circulated and quickly forgotten country newspaper.

Mesdames and Messieurs, are we all mad? Or am I? Or is *Life*? Is the whole thing what it appears to be to so many—aimless, insane, accidental jumble and gibberish? We articulate or put together out of old mysteries new mysteries, machines, methods, theories. But to what end? What about all the Hauchawouts and Widdles, past, present, and to come, their sons, daughters, and relatives, and all the fighting and the cruelty and the parading and the nonsense?

The crude and defeated Ida. And this fumbling, seeking, and rather to be pitied dub with his rhymes. Myself, writing and wondering about it all.

A letter written several years later by my relative's wife added this for my enlightenment :

"I think you ought to know that Widdle has been taken with religion and now interprets the Bible in his own fumbling way, coming to me occasionally for help. He ploughs his fields and meditates, expecting God any minute to come in the form of a dragon or giant and finish him and all men. He has figured out that the world will come to an end in this wise : God will appear as a dragon or a gigantic man, and wherever He places His foot, there life will cease to exist. That will be the end of the world. Yet he has no notion that the world is any larger than the United States at most. I said to him once : ' But, Widdle, it would take Him a long time to step over all the world and crush out all life, wouldn't it ? ' ' Yes, that's so,' he replied, ' but I guess His feet are bigger than ours—maybe as big as a barn, an' mebbe He can walk faster than we can.' He has lost himself completely in the Bible now and reads and meditates all the time, applying everything he reads to his own few acres. He still lives alone and does his own cooking, fearing, I think, a second wife who might take his possessions from him. But no legal trouble has ever been made him. People are a little sorry for him, I think. His chief dish is cornmeal mush, which he boils and pours into saucers or flat plates to the thickness he wants, because he doesn't know how to pour it into a deep dish and slice it."



# EMANUELA





## EMANUELA

**A** TEMPERAMENT and a life that cannot be driven from one's mind provokes thought. Hence this.

In my early semi-Bohemian but more strictly working days in New York there breasted that trying literary sea a certain group of young aspirants which often referred to her as "Our Lady of the Snows," "The Iceland Venus," "Madonna della Kamchatka" and similar semi-critical, semi-laudatory characterizations. And my word for it, in a cold, virginal, intellectual way she was beautiful as Minerva must have been beautiful. Young, too—not more than twenty. Nevertheless, despite those still, intellectual and examining if not exactly icy blue eyes and the gold-brown hair that like a lovely silken wreath encircled her forehead, I was critical. How could anyone so beautiful, so voluptuously formed, be so indifferent to every eligible and likable youth within her ken? No visible emotional interest in anyone! Only thoughts, lofty thoughts, and always, in so far as she was concerned, refined and yet forceful argument. She was so interested in making the world a better place. And yet, the smoothness and soft provoking roundness of her cheeks and neck and arms and body; the moving and yet so elusive lift of the eyebrows above the high, waxy forehead. Verily, a Greek girl, I thought, come to New York in this year of our Lord out of the depths of one of the most comfortable if not exactly fastidious homes of northern conservative Illinois—Wheaton, to be exact—and destined, possibly, by her brains and beauty to make a stir.

Her desire and intention, as I gathered at the time, was to write—first, short stories, and later novels and plays. Her presence in the limited and at that time wholly undistinguished group of egotists struggling for existence in the region of Washington Square was due to the belief that in part and along with other phases of the great city we constituted "local colour" of an artistic and literary flavour, from which, as

she herself once told me, one gathered, or might, criticism, verification, and so enthusiasm and strength for one's own ideas. Have I not said that she was highly intellectual?

At the same time there was slumbering in her somewhere (in her "subconscious," as Freud would have said, I am sure!) a suspicion or conviction that although life was to be learned from life, and that in order to create art one must interpret the actual in some form which would awaken a response in those who had been or were in contact with the actual, still, studying life at first hand and knowing it as a writer, did not necessarily mean knowing all of it. There were, as she once explained (not to me but to a fellow-aspirant with whom she chanced to enter into an argument in my presence) depths or phases of life and thought to which an aspiring writer, of however great talent or genius, need not, and therefore should not, descend. (I was sure at the time that one arrow of her quiver was meant for me.) Also that facts and phases there were which were decidedly beyond the provinces of art or mental illumination in any direction. But to all of this the writer with whom she was arguing—and who has since become famous—replied that she was wrong, that she would better read some of the writings and experiences of the really great writers and poets and painters. Whereupon more argument as to who were the really great writers—Scott and Dickens and Thackeray and George Eliot and Hugo (as represented by "*Les Misérables*") or Tolstoy, Tourguéniev, Flaubert, de Maupassant, Balzac, Zola, Fielding, D'Annunzio (already in translation with "*The Triumph of Death*"). Naturally, the arguers split on the question of material and an author's "right" to his material. As Emanuela—the heroine of this story—saw it, neither Sophocles (in "*Œdipus Rex*") nor Fielding (in "*Tom Jones*") nor D'Annunzio (in "*The Triumph of Death*") nor Balzac (in "*Cousin Betty*") nor de Maupassant had any right to take for analysis, let alone dwell upon the same at novel or play length, the grosser and hence baser passions of mankind. Not that such things might not be understood (at a distance) or touched upon even by way of illustrating right from wrong and illuminating the paths of evil and failure, but to dwell upon them, as in the case of Zola : . . faugh! Or to fall from grace in even one

work, as in the case of Tolstoy ("The Kreutzer Sonata"), of Flaubert ("Madame Bovary"), when the same writers could and did write such great books as "War and Peace" or "Salammbô" . . . Ah, what an error lay in that!

Positively, as she uttered these conservative *obiter dicta* the while I sat to one side and contemplated her physical pulchritude, I was astonished. To think, as I there and then said to myself, that anyone so shrewd and observant as well as attractive as this charming Emanuela should fail to grasp the central significance of sex in life, its enormous and so often deranging force. Had she really within herself no indicative passions, or moods even, which might serve, however determinedly she might seek to avoid the leer of the satyr in us all, to guide her toward a clearer perception as to what it is that motivates the most of us? I could scarcely believe that she was so set in so emasculate a version of the good, the true, and the beautiful. And yet, there she was talking as she was.

Among those who observed and frequently criticized her—yet secretly admired her, I am sure—was one Ernest Scheib, we will call him, a young writer fresh from Dakota, with talent aplenty and dreaming of literary fame in New York. His subsequent mental eclipse by insanity depressed me as much as any tragedy I have ever contemplated. At the time he, and occasionally Emanuela, was part of a group that rotated about a painter, Munchhof by name, then living and working in Washington Square, a dynamic and vivid Westerner who drew to himself all types—illustrators, playwrights, architects, editors, poets, frequently more potential than placed.

Now the thing about Scheib that interested me was that he was poetic as well as realistic—one of those rare colourful temperaments out of our soil and light that occasionally belies the darkling, material American scene. He was so young, so tentative in so many of his approaches, so attractive and romantic, at the same time that he was solidly, after the fashion of Balzac or de Maupassant, enamoured of reality. And yet, in the face of this girl's coldly Puritanic reactions, or perhaps because of them, he was drawn to her, though (because of her own attitude toward him, probably) bitterly critical at times.

"She a writer!" he once said to me sourly as he passed out after one of our meetings, and possibly because she had

repulsed his advances. "What does she think she is going to write about? People who live as she thinks they do? And have real people praise her? Toodle-waddle!" Innocent that he was, Scheib was firmly convinced that some day, and soon, the current and all-enveloping romanticism must give way to a sound and sincere picturing of life.

But in spite of his criticism of her, Emanuela prospered, whereas he, and myself, did not. For in addition to her beauty she was possessed of a practical insight which enabled her to construct various informative as well as instructive articles tending to demonstrate the onward-and-upwardness of the world in many ways. And how the current magazines of that day devoured such things. Also a suave type of Puritan romance which she considered realism and which presented some dear old father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or what have you, doing the right thing at the right moment to save somebody in some dramatic and, from a moral point of view, most satisfactory way. Once in Munchhof's studio in Washington Square, on a pleasant sunny afternoon, Scheib, sitting at one of the front windows overlooking the Square and reading the then all-too-widely distributed *Saturday Evening Post*, suddenly burst forth with "Hell," at the same time casting said widely-circulated medium to the floor.

"And who has disagreed with us now?" observed Munchhof calmly, the while he stepped back to eye the painting he was absordedly retouching.

"What a damn fool that girl is!" went on Scheib, without indicating whom—though by this time we knew he referred to Emanuela and one of her stories. "Such rot! An honourable family friend saves a wayward girl from herself—by a few kind words!" He kicked the paper still farther away.

"Evidently you don't believe in the good intentions of kind friends where wayward girls are concerned," observed Simondson, a young editor. Scheib made no reply.

"The trouble with Ernest is," went on Munchhof, "he's jealous of Emanuela. She gets in the *Post* and he doesn't." He cackled irritatingly.

"Oh, you guys give me a pain!" replied Ernest sourly. (He was referring to the editorial tribe.) "It's the whole damned magazine game that's no good. You're all trying

to find some silly, conventional stuff that your readers will like, and any fool that will come along and write it for you gets in." At this Simondson rose and bowed for his profession. "And that's what makes her so cocky about her notions of how things are. She gets 'em published." His lips curled scornfully.

"One word, Scheib," pleaded Munchhof artfully, for it looked as though Scheib were leaving then and there. "Pardon me. If she were nice to you, what about her then?"

"Oh, hell!" retorted Scheib, and went out.

"I'm sure he's struck on her at that," insisted Munchhof, who was a fair judge of *homo sapiens*. "He takes too much interest in her."

And believe it or not, this wounded me painfully, for whether she was interested in Scheib or not, I was interested in her and was dreaming wild dreams of what seemed at the time an impossible friendship with her.

"She is attractive, and that probably helps her get a hearing," went on Simondson, who now had no Scheib to hear him. "But if her stuff weren't valuable, she couldn't get it published."

"Valuable to one of your popular magazines," sneered someone else—possibly myself.

"I can always scratch Scheib," went on Munchhof, "by insisting that he can't write as well as she can. But anyhow, we won't see much of her around here any more. I hear she's joined the A. Club and the National Arts. That means she won't spend much time here."

At that I noticed Scheib, who had suddenly returned for something, pause and look at Munchhof, although his only comment was: "Is that so?" But I had the feeling that there was much more than light indifference behind his look. And let me confess it here. This look of Scheib's did not cheer me. He was younger, better-looking, and there were not a few girls who found him attractive. Might not Emanuela eventually turn to him? And then what? She would be gone from me for ever. She could marry Scheib easily enough. And although I did not care for her dogmatic moralizing, I was not so sure but that I (I bow), if she would only be so kind as to take an interest in me, might not be able to change her, make her see life in a different and more liberal way.

(The vanity of me ! ) For beautiful she was. Often I sat and looked at her milk-and-rose complexion, her soft hair and grey-blue eyes, and marvelled that anyone so physically perfect could hold such perverse views. And occasionally she and I argued, but never in the blatant way of Scheib and some of the others, since for once in my life, and because I had an object in view, I tried not to affront her imaginings concerning life. Rather I even faintly praised her stories, or if not that, said things which were calculated to make her feel that they were not as conventional, and so worthless, as I felt them to be.

And then a lapse of time. And in spite of my interest I did not see her as often as I desired. She was here, she was there. With the money she was making from stories and articles, as well as—or so I understood—an income derived from her parents, she could travel to places to which neither Scheib nor I nor any of this group could go at this time—Europe, New England, the south in winter. More, she appeared to be part and parcel of one of those smart and editorially successful, self-impressed and self-assertive groups of intellectuals who from time to time, as is the case in every capital, achieve the spotlight and beat the drum.

But after a year or so—myself having achieved an editorship of sorts by then, who should arrive on the scene but Emanuela, and looking me, or rather my magazine, up as a market. And—the magazine being what it was—popular—I finding some of her stuff available . . . Result, we were soon, and for the first time, on easy and even genial terms. More, there were, of course, various literary and art functions about town at which I now found myself meeting her. And still more, as I hereby confess, to some of these I most definitely went in the hope of encountering and contacting her more intimately. Her beauty, in spite of all this time, still captivated me. Unfortunately, as I hereby report, I still found her too respectable and prosperous, too much fortified by the world from which she derived, to pay any particular attention to me. At the same time, there was there a refinement and interest in things beautiful and intelligent which, coupled with her charm, made me persist in my attempt to fascinate her. But also, and always in connexion with me, there was an elusiveness, sometimes, as it seemed to me, a critical, and

so defiant, or emotionally recessive and even fearful attitude, which troubled and even angered me. For occasionally, when we met or were dancing or talking, there was warmth as well as a sudden and seemingly illuminating *nearness* in her eyes which caused me to think "She likes me" or "she might." Sometimes, as I thought, it appeared to be even more than that, as though and at last she was about to admit to a real emotion. At such moments, however, I was likely to become too impetuous or too intense, and venture upon some purely emotional compliment, whereupon and instantly, she would change. That old and purely intellectual frigidity would return, the unusual warmth and colour of the moment before evaporate completely. I could see it fade from her eyes, and would then experience a mental chill, which, as experience proved, was sufficient to drive me from her for weeks.

At last, in a kind of fury against these encouraging approaches and freezing recessions, I said: "Oh, the devil! Why bother? I cannot make anything out of her. Either she likes me or she doesn't. But if she does, let her finally find out for herself in some way. I cannot go on like this, and I won't." And so I really did my best to withdraw. And she, no doubt sensing something of my mood and feelings—some criticism of herself therein—would let me go for months at a time—in several instances for as many as six—when some chance encounter, bringing us together again, we would go through the same thing and of course separate as before. Yet as I also noticed and for all her beauty she did not marry. Rather, many who knew and admired her not only for her beauty but her mind, spoke of her as too cold. Once Munchhof, who kept more or less in touch with her and myself, said to me: "There's something wrong with Emanuela. She's either undersexed or too purely mental, or something. You can't tell me that a girl as beautiful as she is wouldn't have married or had an affair with someone by now. It isn't natural. I always thought she should have been drawn to Scheib, really."

A sharp pang in me at this. Scheib! My old and yet younger rival! And as much as I cared for him personally, how much I resented his possible interest in Emanuela or hers in him! But of course all that was dead now, for him and for me.



And yet, just about this time—not more than three or four months later—a most interesting thing in connexion with him and Emanuela and myself. I should say here, in connexion with Scheib, that like Emanuela, and throughout all this time, he had really been one of the sharp, almost poignant interests in my life, for I admired him so, perhaps even loved him. That glassy, water-clear mind of his ; its glacial and yet so colourful and truthful reflections of life (art, letters, men, events). Commercially or materially or practically, as you will, he was seemingly making no progress, selling almost nothing. And in consequence not eating as regularly as he might, or dressing as warmly as he needed to. And yet the quality of the few things he wrote ! The quiet, deprived and yet unresentful meditation on the type of thing he should do ; the slow, painstaking way in which he was trying to formulate something—a type of short story which should be an exquisite distillation of a vast and moving reality.

And how often, although he was twenty-four to my thirty-four, I went to seek him out in his bleak little room in Sullivan Street south of Washington Square. His attitude stoic, unabashed and unashamed, fascinated me. Ha, life ! What did anything matter ? Clothes, food, entertainment ?—Everything was entertaining and important. Love ? It was a singular thing, it had not affected him much as yet, he was glad to report. In case it did he would be interested to study its effects. True, he was moved by beauty in many ways—a dancing child, a girl's hair blowing about her eyes. But man's true distinction was in the realm of intensive thought. His glory was to explore this mystery about him. All else was folly—shoddy—muddy degradation. He would none of it. And so enamoured of him was I in those thin, new, exploring days that I used to wish that I might take his spare, tempestuous, ironic body and soul in my arms and mother it. And there were others who felt as I did and who, through me, saw to it that he did not want. There were ways past all his suspicions of reaching him with what he needed until he could make his way for himself.

But then, and to the horror and misery of all of us, a great calamity. *The* great calamity for him. Insanity. For it now appeared that he was part of a family with a psychiatric

history. His father mad, had died by his own hand. An aunt, a great-grandfather, insane. And now Scheib ! Genius, and insanity ! That fair Hamlet-like mind. It began, as I was told, with delusions of danger. One of us who loved him most was seeking his life. A little later on, it was another who wished to circumvent his literary career. Also he now had a philosophy—the key to all thought. Eureka, it explained everything ! But into whose hands might he trust it ? And then, and at the same time almost, delusions of grandeur. He was rich. He was famous and powerful. He could order things and his commands would be obeyed. I cannot go into the long, depressing story. It took time and loving care to place him where he would not be ill-used.

But now as for Emanuela and himself—her part in this amazing development. One day in the second or grand stage of his state, he appeared at Emanuela's door—and when he had never so much as once been there before. (Or so she said.) At that time she did not know that he had lost his mind. Nor did I. But from somewhere—possibly a magazine—he had secured her address, and now, gloriously enough, he was the daring adventurer, the captain and master of his life and the lives of others. And for the first time—openly, that is—it appeared that Emanuela was the all-desired. His intention, as he explained to her on her opening the door, was to take her to St. Kitts in the Barbados and marry her. He had a yacht. They were to possess a plantation. And whatever her mood, there was to be no escape on her part. Look, he was armed ! And he produced a knife. She must come quietly, no sign to anybody. There was a taxi downstairs, he had brought it.

Terrified and flattered, as she explained to me afterwards, she went with him. He was so wild and yet in his madness attractive. There was about him that that evoked respect as well as sympathy. Besides now he declared a great love for her. He had always loved her, he said. She had scorned him, but never mind now. Come, he was master ! She would do as he said, as his love ordered. And in a confusion of terror and wonder, with no help immediately at hand, she did accompany him, she walking before, he behind. But bethinking herself at each step how to do, what to say. If

only some man would come up the stairs or an officer be standing in the street !

And then, as she said, an inspiration ! What about clothes ? Money ? Most poorly dressed he was, always. And so, once seated in the taxi, she decided on her course. Would he not permit her, since she had nothing to wear, first to stop at a bank and cash a cheque ? Afterwards he might come with her to a store and help her select a few things. He could not expect her to go this way, surely. After studying her with suspicious eyes, as she related, he at last said yes, he would. But let her remember that he was at hand ! One word, one gesture—he showed the knife he had brought. Hence more thought, and a cold terror on her part as they rode. Then at the bank in Fifth Avenue, he getting out first and elaborately conducting her to the door. And once inside following her to a counter where under his eyes she wrote a cheque. But now what ? Fortunately for her, there was a woman's booth or ante-room into which she had to go to cash her cheque, but not without imploring him to understand that it must be so. Would he not wait at the door ? And then he standing at the door, she before the teller's window, murmured, she said : " Please, please make no sign. That man at the door is mad. Do something ! He may kill me ! " And at once, while the teller appeared to be studying the cheque, the guard signal and two guards coming up behind Scheib and seizing him. But with Scheib looking over his shoulder and calling to Emanuela : " You did this. But you'll come with me yet. I will be back. " Yet never coming back after that, to her or to anyone.

But the import of all this to me at that time ! For despite Munchhof's reiterated gibe that Scheib really cared for Emanuela, I never really believed, or perhaps better, wished not to believe it. But now here was the proof—this visit of his to her when there were so many others he had met. Then we had been indulging in an identical passion. Or was it that ? For despite her resistance, if not complete indifference, I had been living well enough. There were others who were not so cold. But Scheib ! That austere soul. So lonely and perhaps thinking of her more passionately than ever I could. And now he was mad, safely incarcerated in an asylum where

he could never trouble her or me any more, whereas I, unless there were others preceding me in her interest . . . ?

The months passed—a year—two years. During this interval Emanuela went abroad and apart from an occasional letter or card I did not hear of her. But such letters ! Always brief and about some intellectual adventure somewhere. A certain Gordon Craig had established an experimental theatre somewhere in Italy and she was investigating that, interested by the pure art of it. A certain Jacques Delcroze had developed Eurythmics and was teaching them to inspired disciples somewhere. She was there. There was a celebrated American dancer with a school in Greece or Rome—I forget where—she was there. But never a word about love for anybody or the possibility of marriage. Just mind, mind, mind, the advancement of art through thought—cold, emotionless thought—or so I insisted to myself always.

But then, after an absence of two years, her return. She had been called back by something in connexion with her family, which much later I learned about. A little later she resumed her characteristic relations with those who so changeably and yet perennially make up the active art forces of New York. And despite those who had quit or ceased to try or were dead or married, here she was again in touch with things as before, only now some five or six years older and apparently as uninvolved emotionally as ever. And in one sense that was a comfort ; in another not, since it argued some emotional defect.

But by now I was no longer an editor, having retired to resume my literary activities. And not at all in touch with her save by hearsay. But just the same, for some complicated reason, partially connected with a self-resented liking or desire for me, maybe, an invitation from her. She was at such and such an address. And with so much to report—travels, experiences, etc. But now I answered not. I could not believe it would come to anything and I no longer desired her arm's-length friendship—or so I thought. But next, since I no longer troubled to respond—having been free of her so long and being weary of criticism, real or implied—a gingerly visit to my abode. She had come to see what I was doing. She had heard that I was working on another novel, and she would so like to read it and make some suggestions if I would permit.

She had always thought—and she was sure she was right—that if I would only listen to certain suggestions, not necessarily from her, of course, but from someone, she did feel that I ought to talk to her or someone. Whereupon a mental row in which I all but destroyed her, as I thought. Yet with herself walking about my place with the air of one who was saying : “ Now you must not think I am going to stay very long. Nor will I make myself comfortable for fear it might be misinterpreted. There is an interest here, of course, but this is purely social. . . . ” This damned woman, I thought. Will she never let me be ?

Yet her appearance ! The clothes ! The careful grooming ! A smartness which, as I thought at the time, certainly did for the notion that a woman writer could not be beautiful. And an aroma of what ? Could all her thought be as severely intellectual as she seemed to wish to indicate ? What is there back of all this if not a basic sensual desire ? Else why should she follow me up in this way ? And yet now here as always boring me with comment concerning style—some school or laboratory or movement in connexion with which she chanced to be interested and views concerning which she brought. Yet in this talk, as in others before and after, falling afoul of life or morality or reality, and disagreeing, of course. Yet moved by the smooth, velvety freshness of her cheeks and chin and forehead, the roundness of her neck and arms, the liquid serenity of her eyes, and myself drawing near as usual, too near as she saw it. Whereupon, sensing and recoiling from the reconnoitring acquisitiveness of me, herself congealing and preparing to leave. There was something she had to do, someone to see. Whereupon from the depths of my being, anathemas excommunicating her and all evasive or Puritanic beauty everywhere for ever ! Damn her ! Never, never again should she be admitted to my presence ! Never, never again one simple interested thought on my part to be sent in her direction ! Never !

And so a few months of silence, separation and seeming indifference, with occasional thoughts as indicated by cards from her straying my way. Cards from Cape Cod, Quebec, Brittany, craving my attention for the beauty of these places. Yet no word from me, although plenty of thoughts. And

now and then I found myself reading an occasional story or article by her in some magazine and damning her out as usual for her truly recalcitrant and wholly unilluminating point of view.

But then fall coming on and people coming back, other things there were which tended to revive this connexion. For instance, there was the A. Club party which I attended and to which she came, a seraph in white. I recall a completely enveloping seamless blue velvet cloak which she opened at the neck and let fall to the floor and out of which she stepped as out of a blue basin. The accidental contact had its usual effect, and I showed it, whereupon, evasively she receded but talked of coming to see me. (Never, I asserted to myself, and went away.)

But later a letter to inform me of a new address. She had taken, experimentally, one of the new model tenement apartments on the East Side. A wonderful atmosphere. I must come and see what was being done for the poor working-man or tenement dwellers—she being psychically if not actually one and the same with all of them. At any rate, she was gathering “material” or local colour out of which she imagined (or so I sneered) she was later going to build a great slum-dwellers’ novel. I think I damned her heartily for that. The watery-veined, lily-livered this and that! Yet believe it or not, and thinking of the white dress and the flower-like face and grace as evinced at the A. Club, I journeyed to the East Side, a second friendly letter being the cause. She had such a really quaint and delightful place, she wrote. It was so different from Washington Square. Here were the towers of Williamsburg and Manhattan Bridges in full view. And in the distance, south and north, various commercial towers as well as the lights and sights of East River. Just above her was the roof, yet no one ever venturing up there. Too much real air and beauty and silence. And she herself would cook the dinner. And we could sit up on the roof afterwards and look down on the sights and sounds. She said nothing of a girl medical student room-mate who would be back at eleven, or that the place was furnished after the best Washington Square fashion of the hour—paintings, loaned statuary, and books, etc.

I journeyed and was enchanted by the crowded, hot streets of a stifling June night. Summer seemed fluttering by like a

velvety, black-winged moth. From the roof, as she said, could be seen the lights and the great towers. And the stars seemed to reach down to the lamps of the river. And Emanuela, in white organdie and an apple-green apron, hurrying here and there and actually preparing a dinner for me while she talked of art or took me to the roof or recounted the wonders of reality as evinced by the poor sweat-shop Jews who gasped for air in the smelly streets below. I found her warm, exotic, more human and girl-like than ever I had seen her before. She seemed mentally close and emotionally affectionate.

Yet on the roof after dinner, what? She seemed so near to a rapturous life mood with me that at last I seized her, pulled her close to me, put my lips to hers. But as usual she was struggling, pulling away, and adding at the same time: "Don't! Stop! Oh, please! I don't like you this way! Please, don't!" And an almost angry bound like a fighting cat. Whereupon this time I said things angry, half ugly. What a fool she was! Did she really know anything that she wanted? Did she? And anyhow all this bother just for a dinner! The letters, the organdie dress, the gay wide green sash that held it, the apron! Why all this nonsense for a conservative social chat with me? Why not her roommate and six others as chaperons?

Just the same, and in the face of all this, she was still stubborn and cold. If I couldn't behave, very well. She certainly hadn't thought of what I was thinking—this final close contact. Never! She hadn't thought of me in that way. Couldn't. True, she liked me, but for my mind. (Not my looks, not even my books, you see. They were this, that, defective as art.) But if I could not see her as a warm, helpful, mental companion, one who would always love to talk with and be near me and one with whom I could talk . . . I finally strode out, saying to her as to myself that this was the last. She was not to write me any more or bother me in any way. And then as I went along the crowded streets, thinking—not even a kiss. Not even a loving embrace. And she the exquisite, blossomy thing that she is! I frowned and shrugged my shoulders for days.

Yet, and this in spite of myself and her, I was not through with her either. Far from it. For once the following winter,

at an A. Club dance, there she was, in the gusty foyer, slipping out of a heavy, blood-red velvet cloak like the blue one of the year or so before. And for me as alluring as ever ! Those serene, blue-grey eyes. That smooth down-like complexion. And she strode as Diana might. Despite our quarrel she came up to me. How had I been ? Was I in the same place ? She had been here or there, was not down in the East Side any more, just now living with her mother who was visiting her here in New York. Her mother would be stopping by for her presently, around eleven-thirty. Wouldn't I like to meet her ? She would like her to meet me. And meanwhile, if I would, we might dance. Yes ?

Rather sourly, considering our last conversation, and yet with an irresistible glow, too, I agreed. Surely. Also I would be glad to meet her mother. And yet why, as I was asking myself, should I be pleased to meet either her or her mother ? Hadn't I agreed with myself never to bother with her again ? I pumped up quite a dislike, and except for another girl who was dwelling here in the club and whom I was to join later, I would have left.

Yet, later in the evening, seeing her coming toward me again, I melted. There was something about her, as cold as she was, that evoked hope. If only I could break that mood of hers—make her like me enough ! If only that Minervaesque armour of intellect, research intellect, could be pierced ! Positively, there was that about her rounded arms, her neck and waist and thighs and breasts, that evoked passionate lightnings. There would be thoughts, as direct as light, as weakening as heat, that would flash past—thoughts that showed us alone and revealed the one to the other. Yet she resisting ; I at last conquering. And it was as though I were victorious for the least fraction of a second ; also, and on account of that, as though I could not endure the pain of so wanting and not having. And with this would come resentment, and even hate, the desire to say some rough or sneering thing and then turn and walk away. Yet even as she approached there would be this blinding wish to win her, and so I would wait. And we would dance together and look at each other. And I would think of some intimate question to ask, but because of what had been so far, refrain and then hate her, even wish to strike her.



And on this occasion, as before, I was disappointed, and yet not wholly so. Something in her manner, a certain warmth or unction which yet carried no words to match it pervaded the contact. Or perhaps I imagined so. But she did say that she had wanted to write, only she was afraid to. I was so difficult. She had so many warm impulses toward me, friendly or affectionate, yet all inhibited by my determination to read something into her that was not there. And really now, wasn't it possible for me to like someone—a girl like herself, say—without wishing or being determined to make her do what she did not wish to do? There was something about sex—she would confess it—that made her sick, deathly sick, to even think of. Did I understand that? Could I? I wondered and wondered whether she was lying—but without grasping the obvious pathologic fact in her case, that she was frigid and yet not so—fighting an almost hopeless inhibition which I had not sense enough or courage enough to break for her. But even so, her beauty! Could not this strange evasion be overcome? I even speculated as to whether it might not be possible for me, the circumstances being what they were, to indulge in a happy camaraderie which should consist of walks and talks and confidences, brother and sister-wise, without wishing to carry it further than that. But no! What nonsense! What lunacy! And I told her so. Men were not like that. I was not. She would not like me that way if I were. She was indulging in some unnatural, hopeless, futile dream. In God's name, what was all her physical beauty for?

"You are so difficult," was all she said at the time.

"I am," I replied.

The rencontre died away in, on her part, cool half-resentment, on mine in a kind of defeated hate. Yet just as I was leaving she was back again. Her mother had arrived. Didn't I want to come and meet her? Please. She had told her mother of me. I looked at her, thinking why the devil is it that I cannot persuade this Venus to something more than a mental camaraderie? And so thinking, walking with her to meet her mother, yet saying *for the last time in this world!* And then bowing to and shaking hands with a short, stout, hard, dull, and yet carefully and expensively

dressed woman, thin-lipped, square-browed, unimaginative and socially correct, who looked at me as she might at some young candidate for her daughter's hand.

Now one of the thoughts that held me at the time was this—that while it was passing strange that such beauty and intelligence as Emanuela's should emanate from such a source, still perhaps this was likewise the source of her emotional chill as well as her sex inhibitions. For what could this woman give a daughter in the way of emotion or warmth? Nothing! On the other hand, it was interesting to see how humanly fond Emanuela was of this numbskull, for obviously her mother was a conventional numbskull, whereas Emanuela, as remote as she might be from a realistic concept of life, was still miles from such thoughts as her mother was entertaining. Yet along with an obvious fondness for her mother one could sense in Emanuela an intellectual tolerance which was in part amusing because of the source from which it derived. Indeed, it was interesting to see them together. I found myself assuming that the father must be better than the mother, surely, else no such daughter as this.

And then some time later—the following spring, I think—I met her father. This was on Fifth Avenue and they were shopping. He was tall, well-built, handsome, but as I saw at once of a decidedly conservative and close-mouthed type or turn—your calculating yet conventional lawyer lured by social place as well as financial and legal success and careful of his every thought and word—so much so that I could not help feeling that I was talking to a legal as well as social automaton. His real thoughts, if any, were not for anyone but himself. And exactly the husband of the mother I had seen. A safe—and so far as Chicago and Wheaton, Illinois, were concerned—politely successful lawyer. In fact, long before this I had gathered that Emanuela's home in Wheaton had been the centre for much conventional as well as partially religious uplift. She had once admitted as much to me. Also that one of the deepest regrets of her father and mother as well as their friends had been that she had chosen to forsake Wheaton and marriage for New York and its pitfalls or evils, literature being one of the same.

After seeing her in the company of her father, and remembering her mother, I decided that no real personage could

spring from such a union, and tried as usual to forget her. But I could not. Her mere symmetry and texture and some deep-seated and not to be surfaced desire of hers would reach me and I would think of her as not wholly glacial and so not wholly unobtainable. Surely, surely! And suppose one could reach to her? The thought of it was so inflammable at times that I would find myself in a kind of rage thinking of her and life, its persistent interpositions and evasions which left one like myself so constantly and fruitlessly hoping.

And then, her mother's health failing—or so she thought—there was a long trip somewhere, a two years' stay. And after that a meeting in New York with me for lunch and to see an exhibit somewhere, but really to restore this hopeless and, as I saw it, useless contact. For it was fully eight years now since I had first met Emanuela. And while she was still beautiful and desirable, as I saw it, she was not getting any younger. And one characteristic thing about this reunion—she was on her way, and taking me, too, to see a collection of dreamy and sensuous paintings by one Arthur B. Davies. Gracile nudes strewn or draped like flowers on a starlit summer lawn. Lily-like nudes faltering here and there in dreams or in sleep. Seeking and sensuous nudes straining upward with their bodies and arms and faces like flowers, bodies and arms that seemed to me to be seeking light and air, freedom and delight above the muddy and dank repressions of the day or the world in which they found themselves.

"But how can you like such things, Emanuela?" I commented. "You know you have no interest in the creative processes of life. Where men and women are concerned, you invariably evade or deny." (I am not pretending to the actual words but to the substance of what I said.) "You are always here and there looking at God knows what—Eurythmic dancers, paintings like these . . . But why? When it comes to reality, your personal relation to such things, you are not there. Even in your work there is nothing of anything like this. But if you're so interested, why isn't there?"

And then, as usual, she turned on me with comments about myself. I was this, that, lacking in so very many necessary inhibitions, not constructed to sense, let alone observe, the necessary refinements and nuances of organized social life. A

long and severe charge. Whereupon I flared : And who was she to be talking to me ? And why pursue me through the years ? Had I sought her out ? Either she knew what she wanted or she didn't. If she did or didn't, please stay away from me in the future. I could not endure any longer this silly palaver about social inhibitions, especially from a woman of her type. What a pity Scheib, at the time he called on her and as mad as he was, had not been able to force her to a contact with reality ! And then I strode out, never, as I hoped, to be bothered by her again.

Yet still I was not done with her, or she with me. For the following year, having taken a studio in a summer art colony near New York—in New Jersey then—she was back with an invitation. It was a most inviting spot—Doornvelt in Rockland County. A most amusing art group lived and worked there. Her particular studio was placed two miles to the east, so one might truly argue that it was or was not a part of that cottage world, but on the Edgecomb or western slope, which was the great attraction for her, and overlooking the Edgecomb River. A pretty brook ran directly beneath her southern window. And she and a certain Rosalie Somebody had taken it for the summer, only recently Rosalie had been compelled to go somewhere else for a few weeks and except for a servant and occasional guests she was alone. And now wouldn't I like to come out for a few days ? It was true that we had quarrelled, but never mind that. It was a place that would delight my soul, whether I liked her or not. But surely I could forgive and forget that last quarrel. She was sorry, as she always was. Besides, there were some attractive girls here—more attractive than she was—and I should be introduced or not, as I chose.

But the great thing was the beauty of the place and the chance to rest. A great bare, bouldered slope above the cabin climbed to a height of six hundred feet. And below the cabin and the green field which surrounded it the river, sparkling these August nights in the moon. Didn't I want to come, for a week or for as long as I chose, really ? There was plenty of room in this place. Besides, if I desired I could have a tent all to myself down by the river, in a clump of silver birches—a nice, warm, dry tent, where I could write

or rest or play. And Sigrid, her Swedish servant, would cook for me, bring my breakfast, or she herself would prepare and serve it and eat it with me. And she would promise not to intrude in any way, nor should we quarrel. She would not let me quarrel, or rather would not quarrel with me, come what might.

News indeed ! But after ten if not eleven years of waiting since we first met when she was twenty. Only what had happened ? What love affair or affairs had she had that now prompted this liberal approach ? Had she changed, given herself to someone ? Mayhap she was planning to give herself to me ? But I was dubious, and yet in spite of myself curious, too. That old unsatisfied desire to win her ! Only now, because of present connexions, I almost entirely indifferent emotionally. She had waited too long.

In the meanwhile, I should say, the Freudian interpretation of man's subconscious and its influence on his actions and beliefs had arrived and influenced thought all over America. And curiously, in informing myself concerning it, I had this long while been thinking of Emanuela. Was she not a clear illustration of some of Freud's prime contentions ? Her interest in beauty, dancing, sensual art, myself even, her constant flight from sensuality, her peculiarly narrow or conventionalized parents, and very likely her conventionalized if not unhappy youth. What did I know of her really but what she truly desired me to know. The mere fact that she had approached me, however evasively, spelled what ? And now this letter. A last despairing effort, maybe. Should I or should I not go ? The old lure. Yet by now was I not companionated with one who in every way, artistically and physically, allured, entertained and satisfied me ? Only just now she was not here ; had taken "stock" work in Cleveland. And in a week or so I was planning to go there in order to be with her. But this now ? Did I not owe it to myself as a psychologist and writer ?

On the train I calmly speculated as to the possible inroads of time in Emanuela's case. When last we met it had seemed to me that one could see that she was eight years older than when she was nineteen. Yet attractive enough to bring on that quarrel, as I also recalled. But now, with two more years added ! I climbed down from the train at Blauvelt

and there she was, in a little dog-cart borrowed from a neighbour. But now much more mature physically, as I could see, something of that old lissom, lily-like grace absent. But charming as a woman of twenty-nine can be. The most attractive literary woman I had ever seen, I thought. But still enamoured, as I soon found, of all those purely mental things which are the arts and which reflect rather than are life. But were we likely to quarrel again because of that? Not I. If she chose to be more amenable, less remote and evasive, well and good—I would escape her, maybe. We should see. But did I honestly want her now? Time had changed her too much from the nineteen-year-old beauty I had admired. Oh, well, life was like that. Why kick? Besides, I was so differently placed emotionally now than when we had last met. So much more contented and gay.

And my being so minded, maybe, we got along better than ever before. Certainly she was now more friendly and companionable than ever she had been, and I had agreed with myself that I was not going to argue with her about anything, especially herself. Poof! We certainly should be able to differ now without fighting. I certainly had never accepted her viewpoint and decidedly she had not accepted mine. But to-day it really made no difference. And yet, as I noticed now, her words, whatever the topic, were less emphatic or defiant. Unquestionably, she had begun to compromise, in my case at least. But why? Had she read my most recent book and liked it? Had she begun to conceive more kindly of me? Did all men, because of her learned and dogmatic attitude, now shun her? I looked at the swinging body in the white, fleecy dress as she walked from one local shop to another purchasing supplies for the week-end, and could not believe it.

"Tell me, Emanuela," I asked at one point, and curious as to the effect of the question upon her, "have you been interested by this Freudian wave that has swept over us all? And do you accept it as the solution of all that is claimed for it?"

Oh, yes, she had read Freud, and had been impressed in part, but could not accept him fully. No. His analysis was too coarse and too domineering, left no place for anything but itself. And there was nothing that was the whole truth about anything. Still, it had been a revelation to her. But

sex the base of *all* dreams? She was by no means sure that she agreed with that. In fact, she was sure she did not. For how offensive to find that life flourished above such muddy depths, had its roots sunk in them, as he seemed to think! It certainly was disagreeable.

Followed a long talk on chemistry and physics—the physics of Jacques Loeb, the chemistry of Metchnikoff and Crookes and Curie and Le Bel and Carrel and whom not else, whose revelations in regard to the functions and activities of light and the glands were already puzzling the thinking world. For the first time in connexion with her, having read widely since first we had met, I understood her better, could see a great many of the parental as well as mid-western American social conceptions actively operative in her. In spite of all her studies and her desire to know, she was, as she would have put it, “clean-minded,” or as I would have phrased it, not quite broad enough (in spite of all her yearnings toward wisdom) to feel or believe that there is an understanding which makes all things clean—a sufficiently great understanding. Wheaton; her youth in a reserved girls’ school; her guarded investigations at one of our alleged universities; her connexions with popular and respectable magazines, authors, publishers, investigators even! I felt them all in her, working or congealed and binding.

And despite a broadened liking for me, as indicated by little nuances of tone and manner, I was still—if not as much as of old—irritated by the truth that in the face of all she knew—at thirty or thirty-one years of age—she was still hesitating before or whimpering over the scandal of procreation. “Offensive that life should flourish above muddy depths!” What rot! Depths indeed! And this in the face of all her beauty and seeming fitness for the very thing which she abhorred.

And not only that, but sensing as I did at the time that I received her invitation (as well as here in actual contact with her), that she brought me here in connexion with some fight with herself—some battle between her sensual and her Puritanic natures—I was irritated to find myself being made use of in this way. For hours after I arrived, as we went about the town or afterwards drove out to her charming studio, I looked at her suspiciously and I must say with a great deal

of secret criticism. So beautiful and yet so strange. Crazy, really. All but frozen for ever in her conventions and recessions. Yet compelled just the same, but by her mind and not her body or emotions, to take up with a man like myself and one to whom for years, on mental and moral grounds, she had objected, and from whom too often she had fled in a kind of defensive hate or disgust. O Lord! But now at last daring to invite me to visit her in this semi-secluded place. But for what? Would she admit it to herself even now?

But as she soon indicated, her maidenly precautions had prevailed even in such a pseudo-liberal world as this. Sigrid, her maid, she explained, was well known in this colony for her religious convictions. More, she had told the woman who owned the place and leased it to the artists—the one, by the way, to whom the handsome dog-cart belonged—that I was to occupy the tent down among the birches—a tent, by the way, that for several summers past had been occupied by a well-known painter. And not only that, but this evening as well as on the morrow in the late afternoon, several friends were stopping in for tea and dinner. (How careful, I thought, as she named them.) But I need not and would not be bothered by that, since I should not be staying long. This hopeless creature, I finally thought to myself. Why should I not turn around now and take the next train back?

But having come so far and noting the exquisite charm of the place, I decided not. I was working on some sketches of men and had one with me. More, the tent faced one of the loveliest stony brooks I have ever seen, and extending from one side overlooking the brook was a brown sail awning, underneath which, on a smooth lawn, were a table and chair. Inside on a shelf were a number of interesting books. Up from the field which surrounded the house rose the slope of a great hill, green and cool in the late afternoon, and with clumps of shadowy black pines alternating with enormous boulders and patches of perfect greensward. No, I would stay. She might think as she pleased, go where she pleased, act as she pleased. So long as I received my meals promptly, here I would stick, until Monday or Tuesday, anyhow. It was hot in town. And as for her and her friends, why not cut them? Unquestionably, in some errant, repressed and



nervous way, she was thinking that I would assail and overcome her, cave-man fashion, and so free her once and for all of her long and possibly—how should I know?—torturing self-restraint—slay the dragon of repression that shut the Sleeping Princess from the world of her fancy. Well, no dragon would be slain by me this trip. She was going to be allowed to sleep on, now and for ever as far as I was concerned.

And so I announced that I would prefer to avoid her guests and have my dinner here beside the tent. Also my breakfast. And that on the morrow I would decide as to what else. The place moved me to work, inspired me. And I began examining the books on the shelves resting on birch stakes driven into the ground, also a fishing rod which stood in one corner. But though I thought to be rid of her in this fashion, I was wrong. The guests, as she explained, were not coming until five or five-thirty, and it was now only three. We could walk along the shore of this brook and investigate a rugged gorge which in ages past had cut its way. And this we did. Only before doing so it was necessary for her to return to the studio some two hundred yards away and leave instructions for Sigrid. And this she did. But not without, as I noticed on her return, changing her costume. The summery things in which she had met me were replaced now by an ensemble more suitable to a ramble—a rough tweed skirt and bright jumper and cap.

And so an hour or two in which we seemed to relax and she to give herself over to dreams, regardless of whether my intentions or philosophy agreed with hers or not. Had I noticed one thing in connexion with bees? She had not before this summer. There was balsam growing wild farther down the stream here, and evidently its honey was of a more desirable kind than most, for the bees were legion and loud in their efforts to secure it. And alas, as unrestrained and as dissolute as men in their search for an intoxicant. For—and I might believe it or not as I wished, daily at about this time or earlier one could find scores of them on their backs on the ground under the lovely pink bells which carried this sweet, too full of honey or its alcoholic content to fly on their way. I laughed, and went with her to see them. But thinking the while that her old-fashioned Puritanism was certainly being contended with, for she would not have talked of such a

subject with me six years before. Or the next one either, which concerned a girl whom we encountered crossing a little log-rail bridge which spanned this brook farther up. This was obviously an ignorant but not unattractive girl, whose clothes were the flags of her disposition—too bright, too emphatic, and she herself too forward and rakish in her stride and glances. I could not help meditating on the reckless chemistry of youth and ignorance. But as she drew near Emanuela began with : “Look ! I’ll tell you about her afterward.” Then nodding to her as she passed and receiving a friendly “How-do ” in return, she turned to me with : “She’s the daughter of Mrs. Pringle, a woman who does most of the washing and ironing around here. They’re very poor and this girl is supposed to work in New York. She only comes home week-ends occasionally. The pathetic part of it is that it’s so obvious what she is, and that her mother doesn’t know anything about her, for she talks of her daughter’s success in New York. As a matter of fact, the girl comes out here to meet certain people and her mother doesn’t even know that.”

“Ruined !” I commented. “A hopelessly bad girl.”

“Oh, yes”—and I rather marvelled, I must say, at Emanuela’s soft, uncritical “Oh, yes,” as well as her free and easy discussion of this decidedly unconventional situation. For formerly she would not have discussed any such thing. But now she added, and in a quite understanding way, as I thought, “But it is a little sad, I think. I feel so sorry for her ignorant, hard-working mother as well as her. She never had a real opportunity.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” I argued. “If they don’t know any better, and find any real satisfaction, who’s hurt or really unhappy ?”

For answer she looked at me, yet said nothing—a queer and even developed or maybe, as she might see it, defeated change in her.

But coming from Emanuela it was interesting. Never before had she given me any evidence of understanding of, let alone sympathy with, such people in their profound incompetence and inconsequence. Or with immorality, either. Could it be that she was trying to prove to me that she had

changed, was no longer the critical Minerva that I had known?

Yet all of this now fell on dubious and even unsympathetic ears. For I was by no means satisfied that Emanuela was more than trifling or flirting with danger. No doubt she felt that her state was peculiar; that by reason of her views or her peculiar unresponsiveness she was or had been allowing her glorious youth to pass into the sere and yellow without quite thinking or knowing what she was doing. But even so, and in spite of her present mood in regard to herself, there were, no doubt, still deep-seated, strong inhibitions in her which would save her. I was sure of it, Freud or no Freud, age or no age. And so I was inclined to take her and her present mood with a grain of salt. Let her rest, or let her worry. True, up to a year or two or three before I had grieved over her not a little. But now I was no longer so interested. For what was the real truth about her? Could she really love me or anyone? Nonsense! I would not believe it. And I would not be first or last aid to someone who was concluding that her youth was being wasted. The thought was chilling.

Still here was the lovely afternoon sun streaming down the hill-side. And here Emanuela like some bright orchid wandering over this lovely grass with me. What a crazy thing this living and loving could turn out to be! And what a pity that, like all the other contacts, this was destined to be a failure too—only not because of her but because of me.

Sensing that I was indifferent (I assume), she now truly devoted herself to me. And it is true that I relented and went to dinner at the studio, but left early. But afterwards, at ten-thirty, she came down to see whether I knew how to tuck myself in comfortably and warmly for the night. Did I understand this tent cot and the mosquito net contrivance that went with it? There appeared to be some mystery concerning tucking oneself in which I was not supposed to understand and which perhaps, once I had worked myself in for the night, she might return and make sure about. But ah, Emanuela, I thought, the obviousness of all this! Truly, you must be innately lacking in the fever which makes for mating, for I cannot feel even a trace of that which apparently

should be moving you. And sex is not a thought but an emotion. It comes upon one like heat or weakness. This something which is now moving you must be what—an idea merely, a thin, foggily tinted thought, I am sure, which has nothing in common with the ordinary and yet so lovely sensuality which sways the flesh. Or am I misreading you, and are you really moved by something which I cannot feel?

So troubled and puzzled was I by these thoughts that I could not extract any real romance from this situation. Not a trace. I could not feel the glow which I had always anticipated would accompany such a situation as this. Damn! Double-damn! And in such an exquisite world—the moon shining outside, this sparkling stream! I was so cross that by the time she did return, clothed in a soft, thin cape and looking sylph-like in the moonlight, I was frankly determined to indicate my indifference. Why not? She had never hesitated to indicate her indifference to me.

She came over to where I was lying on my side looking out through the lifted tent-flap at the stream and pretending not to see her. But now . . . and if you will believe it . . . a sudden and all but inexplicable change of heart or mood. The moon on her face. The moon-stippled stream outside, trilling and bubbling over the rocks and pebbles.

“All comfy?” she asked.

She was making sure that the blankets about my feet were snugly tucked in. I rose on my elbow and looked at her.

“Yes, very.”

“You managed to find out how it is done?”

“Well, you might revise the work for me.”

She came close to the head of the cot. And then, in the face of my earlier thoughts, I seized her tight and pulled her close to me, sure at last that all her earlier resistance had passed. Yet now, when I sought to draw her face to mine, her body in with me, there was a sudden outburst of that old and seemingly mentally uncontrolled or psychically automatic resistance which had so painfully amazed me in the past and which appeared to leave her powerless to do otherwise. It consisted if of anything of an automatic chemic and so vital rejection, which finally resulted in her releasing herself and running, her cape which had come off in the struggle remaining in

my hands. But with none of the sharp commands or protests which previously, and much to my irritation, had always met my approaches. Instead, principally silence, at best a low muttered "Don't, please." And perhaps, as I thought afterward, more genuine physical, and so uncontrollable, fear than mental opposition as before.

But just the same, and because of all my previous thoughts, I was now determined to let her go. I had not really intended to seize her, and if at this late date, and after all these obviously thought-out preparations she could contest in this manner, let her remain as she was! Certainly there was no real romance or inspiration in it for me. And with that, turning over in my tousled cot and sleeping soundly, so soundly indeed as to be awakened only by the morning sun pouring through the fly which had been raised for the night. And no Emanuela. Later, and after I had concealed the cape, Sigrid arrived with the matutinal bacon, eggs and coffee.

But at ten, and just as I was about to go for a walk, Emanuela. But with no suggestion in her manner or her eyes of the nervous and flighty contest of the night before. On the contrary, a genial assumption of its non-occurrence. Wasn't it a glorious day? Had I slept well? (I assured her I had slept perfectly.) Well, then, if I were agreeable and wasn't too angry with her, she would suggest that we have a swim. Only about a mile away there was a lovely granite pool which, hewed out of solid rock and fed by a tumbling rill, was a part of the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Somebody now in Europe for the summer. It had been designed and cut out of the solid rock by the late Stanford White, who was a friend of the mistress of the place. She could get me a bathing suit that belonged to somebody here.

On my signifying my willingness she was off, only to return presently with two suits. And together we walked, but with no word concerning anything or anyone, just the beauties of this estate we were crossing. I should see how lovely it all was. Yet all the while I was going over her, in a psychopathic sense, with a fine-toothed comb. Impossible. This pendulum-like swinging between desire and revulsion now puzzled as much as it irritated me. For here she was proposing a bathe—which meant her tempting figure in a bathing

suit, and us two alone together. Yet judging by her expression, no consciousness of all this—neither of me nor any other man as her lover or courtier. A dozen times I was on the verge of speaking, breaking forth, really, but decided not to. Let me see if she would manage to dismiss all this without a word.

And so, presently, the pool. A great basin of water, entirely encircled by trees and with bath cabinets directly beyond the northern edge of the rock. Nonchalantly enough she took the bundle of suits and towels which I had been carrying and opened and divided the contents.

But her eyes ! Her face ! You could not possibly have gathered from either that the romance of the scene or the possibility of a sensual rencontre with me was moving or troubling her in any way. As a matter of fact, and as always, a renewed sense of emotional chill or wall of reserve, which I now believe was involuntary and constructed of unnameable and uncontrollable fears or doubts which, like the doors of the watertight compartment of a ship, and always in the face of danger or assumed danger, roll to, shutting all within safe from harm without—in her case the flood of harm that her soul most desired.

I was first out of the bath-house and waiting. And beautiful certainly she was when she appeared in her two-piece apple-green suit, all the more provoking, maybe, because of her eternal elusiveness. At once she dived into the water and came up to a rock ledge on the opposite side, calling to me to emulate her. Deliberately I studied all the graceful lines of her, but still with the chill of her own self-protective determination upon me. Why dive in or come to her ? Did I not know how it would result ? Evasions and a quarrel. Yet if I wished to quarrel now, as I did, I must do something to provoke a quarrel. So plunging in and coming up beside her, I slipped my arms about her and pulled her down to me, holding her close the while I pressed my lips to her neck. But only, as I had anticipated, to again encounter a vigorous muscular rejection. I couldn't and shouldn't. I can still hear the commonplace and lying or frightened "Listen ! Please, you mustn't ! I won't have this ! Surely you don't think it was for anything like this that I brought you to such a public place as this !"

"But you listen to me, instead, Emanuela," I now began. "For you're talking to me for the last time. And that's final. I'm going back to New York after dinner, and you're not going to see me any more, here or anywhere, I promise you. You've played with me for the last time. Last night when you came down to me I thought you had at last decided to face this thing and do what you really want to do. And that was the only reason I took hold of you, and for no other, because I had decided that at last you did know what you wanted and were willing to admit it. Up to that time I was certain that you did not. And I did not run after you because I did not want to, because I was sure that as usual you did not know your own mind. And the same way to-day when you came around with your plans. I came along not because I really expected you would do anything with me or anybody, Emanuela, because I know you won't. You're afraid. You're the victim of some Freudian twist which you can't overcome, and that's the truth! There's something wrong with you. You're suffering from an inhibition of some kind against sex, your normal relationship to men and life. Yet you have been hoping that I, or somebody—but not because you really care for me or anyone—would help you realize yourself in spite of yourself. And yet whenever I have tried to help you, look what has happened! Last night, for instance. That time I came to your place on the East Side. And to-day, right here. I think you must be mad. In fact, I'm sure you are. You're always playing around near the thing you want, and yet when it's really offered to you, you pretend to yourself and to me that you don't want it."

"Oh, please, hush. You don't understand me at all," she exclaimed.

"Oh, don't I? Well, have it that way if you wish. Only this time I'm going."

And I swam across the pool and so out to my dressing-room. And after me Emanuela, I suppose, for when I came out dressed again she was there waiting. But a little repressed or depressed, I cannot say which. And together we went along the path, resuming the discussion as before, but without bitterness now, really with great philosophic calm. And finally Emanuela saying to me: "Oh, well, you may be

right. I don't know. I'm not going to try to explain or adjust myself now. All I know is that I feel as I do and I don't propose to do anything that I don't feel strongly moved to do."

"Right!" I said, and maybe a little more viciously than was necessary. "But then you shouldn't trouble to try to move people to do things that they are not aching to do, either."

"That may be true. I guess it is. But oh, how cruel you can be!" she suddenly exclaimed, her eyes narrowing and her lips twitching in a troubled and nervous way.

We walked in silence to the studio.

I could catch a six-thirty train to New York, as I found, and so threw my few things into a bag. And still courteously accompanied by Emanuela, who could at all times maintain the most diplomatic and reserved demeanour even in the face of such a fiasco as this, was driven by her to the station. And as the train pulled out there she was, waving a smiling farewell.

And then silence—another four years without a word. And then (such is the binding power of old contacts) a letter. As always it carried the easy, familiar tone of one old friend to another. To be sure, we had had our usual spat when we last met, and no one had regretted it more than had she afterwards. But she would not revive any anger for the world. And she would have been in touch with me long before this only there had been serious interfering things. For one thing, not six months after I had seen her, her mother had fallen ill again and she had spent over six months with her, travelling and nursing her. And after that—and only in the last six months—a truly greater calamity had befallen her. For her father, for whom she had always entertained a genuine affection, had suffered a stroke of paralysis, and was, she feared, permanently done with his hitherto active life. And it was all so sad, for he did not want to be. Worse, she was now finding both of her parents more or less dependent on her, not wishing to be separated from her. Yet, too, she could not afford to be permanently dissevered from New York either, and on that account she had at last succeeded in inducing her mother to sell the place in Wheaton and buy a comfortable place on the Hudson, near New York, where she would be in touch with things that interested her and where her



friends could come. And here they all had been since the previous spring.

But would I not like to come up? It was so beautiful there. Every convenience, a lovely view, and they had a car. And it was the real purpose of this letter to ask me. Her father and mother had a separate wing to themselves and that left her almost an entire house in which to entertain. And while she had been able to reassemble at least some of her old connexions, still the one person she would really enjoy having with her from time to time would be me. I could come and stay and work there as much and as long as I pleased—for the summer, if I chose, and the winter, too. For there were rooms to spare. And I need not fear any of the old scenes any more, for she had changed considerably. It was now an honest and warm friendship she was offering, one based on our long and, certainly on her part at least, honestly sympathetic relationship. Only I had never really believed so. Yet if she had acted strangely in my eyes, never had she been wanting in a real and hearty liking for me. And I must not judge her too harshly. Perhaps my judgment of her had been right. She had often thought so since. But certainly there was no ulterior motive now. I must believe that. And would I not come?

I pondered over this letter and decided after a time that I would not go but would merely write and thank her for the invitation. But before I troubled to do this, I was confronted by her once more. It was a cold, rainy, dark November afternoon. And she arrived at my door, hooded and cloaked in a blue rubber raincoat and cap, with gloves and umbrella to match. But looking—to put it in the mildest form—changed. For although stouter and apparently vigorous and healthy, yet even in the sombre light of my studio I could see that her skin was not as fresh as when I had last seen her, nor her eyes as lustrous, nor had she that old swinging, buoyant stride that had characterized her. Otherwise, apparently well enough.

And how had I been? I had not answered her, had I? But surely we were still good enough friends? I assured her smilingly that we were. And then more talk about the house, although I felt that that had really nothing to do with

her visit. Then once her things were off, she threw herself into a large chair before the open fire and gazed at it, her elbow resting on one arm of the chair, her chin in the palm of her hand. She was more quiet and thoughtful than ever I had seen her, less erect and defiant or assured.

"Life doesn't do as much to you as to some, does it?" she finally ventured, looking at me. "Yet you have had plenty to contend with, too. I know that." Then she paused again. "But you have a lot of strength to face it with."

"And that's very cheering," I added cynically.

"Well, it's better than not having it, anyhow." And then she gazed into the fire again. I could see that not a little was wrong.

"What's the matter, Emanuela?" I finally said. "I know you have come to tell me something. What is it?"

"Oh, if you really must know, it's my life. I hardly know where to begin. It seems to me as though for all my living I haven't really lived; as though just now, or in the last two or three years at any rate, I have been seeing things as they are. And it hasn't been very pleasant for me. Oh, I know what you'll say—that it's my own fault and that it could have been different. And perhaps it could have been—if I had been different. Yes, I know it could have been. But how is one to be different if one isn't?"

She looked at me as though I were likely to answer the question in some new way. "Are you coming to me to ask me that?" I said.

"Oh, no. You know that's not it either. I'm lonely and depressed to-day, that's all."

"But is that really all, Emanuela?"

"Well, no, it isn't either," she finally added and with considerable emphasis—something poignant in her tone, as I thought. "It's something else, and I've been wanting to tell you for a long time. For you're almost the only person I know to whom I can come and who will help me, maybe. It's about my father and mother, you know. I wrote you he had a paralytic stroke. But I didn't tell you all, because I thought . . . oh, well——"

"Well," I interpolated, to encourage her since she had paused.

"Well . . . you know how I have always been," she went

on. "But I must tell you now. I really must. I can't stand up against it alone. He—he—my father, you know, he wanted to leave my mother long ago. They never really understood each other, I suppose, but felt they ought to make the best of it for my sake. And I thought so, too, up to a few years ago. But after that last talk of ours and after he broke down I began to see something. I think now that maybe it was because he didn't leave her or she him—that he had that stroke. It was that that brought it on, I think. And mother's sickness, too, before that. He went off to an hotel once for a month, until there were rumours and until I went out there and induced him to come back for my sake. That was just before I went abroad with her for two years, that time, you know. And he stayed in Chicago. But before we left he told me then that he didn't care for mother and hadn't for a long time past; couldn't endure the monotony of it all, especially after I had gone; that there had never been anything much mentally between him and my mother, and that it was only because of our connexions in Chicago and Wheaton and his law practice and his consideration for me that . . . oh, well . . . you know, the usual stuff."

"Yes, I know, Emanuela," I said.

"But that was when I first began to see how things were—how life really is. And besides, I had been reading so much—Freud and psycho-analysis, and thinking of you."

"Well, and then what?"

"Yes, but this is the hardest part, the thing that I suffer most from. It's since he had the stroke, you know. Oh, dear, I sometimes think I am a complete mistake. You were right. I am sure now."

"Go on, Emanuela. Don't be taking the crimes of life upon your shoulders."

"But if I hadn't persuaded him to come back. If I hadn't talked in my usual way, argued that it could be endured by him and her for all our sakes."

"Yes, I know."

"Why then, you see, he might not have had the stroke . . . maybe he might not . . . and then . . ."

She stopped talking and putting her chin in both hands, lowered her head and turned away from me.

"Listen, Emanuela," I said. "It doesn't follow at all that he would not have. Besides, you have faced life well enough until now. Let's see you face it now. Tell me the rest, whatever it is."

"But, oh dear." (She brushed something away from her eyes.) "It's so dreadful. You see, mother hasn't told anyone, doesn't want anyone to know. But he's no longer right in his mind. And now, well, this is the dreadful part of it, all he thinks of, all he wants to do, is to kill her. Isn't that dreadful? He's lame, you know, now, and he can't lift his arms above the elbows, so he can't hurt anyone. But all the time, all the time, night and day, when he thinks she is around anywhere, he comes slipping. I can always tell by the shuffling of his feet. He can't walk—he can only shuffle his feet. And she can always hear him beforehand—coming, you know—in the night or any time—but most always at night." (Her face was tense and drawn as she said this.) "And sometimes he has a knife, or sometimes it's a stick of wood or a piece of iron, or anything. Once it was a chair. But to hear him slipping about in the night like that, after we've gone to bed, shuffling along in the dark, trying the doors or fumbling at the locks! Oh, it's terrible! It's dreadful. And all the worse because I know now why, even if mother doesn't. She still doesn't understand—believes that everything has been done just right. Oh dear, it's always so easy to take whatever he has away from him and make him go back to bed. But we can always hear him. And we have to watch, too, because he might do something, you know, invent some way. And mother cries so, although even now she doesn't understand."

For a moment or two I sat and gazed at her. What a *dénouement*! And for her. Actually I was sorry, very.

"Sex repression, Emanuela," I added. "Long years of it. You see for yourself, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I see. I know now. You needn't tell me. But it's so dreadful to have him there that way. And yet mother feels that it is so dreadful to send him away. And I do, too. I have always cared for him so much."

"And so because of what you think people may say or find out. . . Oh, Emanuela, for God's sake, do come to!

Wake up ! Don't track along in the beaten path to the grave. Think for yourself. Act according to your real right-now emotions. Surely you and your mother, because of your ridiculous Illinois notions and connexions, are not going to torture yourselves in this way. For heaven's sake ! Put him in an asylum. Take your mother and travel. Get out and away. You have the means. And don't come here and cry. It's too impossible ! And you talk of reading Freud and seeing life in a new way ! ”

“ But I've pleaded with mother to do that very thing. I know it's sad. But still . . . ”

“ And what would you like me to do ? Come up and call a physician and have the situation cleared up for you ? There's no other way, you know. Why the deuce can't you act—a hell like that because of what people will think, for you know that's the really chief part of all this. What you or your mother will personally suffer at seeing him properly cared for somewhere else is neither here nor there in this case. You know he will be better off away from you than with you. And so will you two be away from him. And yet here you sit and cry ! ” I got up, thoroughly irritated.

“ Oh, yes, I see it all clear enough. But I have been in such a state. Mother is really ill herself now. I did so want to talk to you before of this. Yes, I will do as you say, of course. I know it can't be helped. But I did want to talk it over with you. You don't mind, do you ? ”

“ Mind ? Of course not. But what a genius you have for doing the conventional thing, Emanuela, and making me want to beat you up into the bargain ! ”

She smiled sadly. She did wish I would come up. And that time—did I remember ? I was right, and she was wrong. I should have forced her. But would I come up just for old sake's sake ? It would do them both so much good.

And I did go, once.

But the week following her father was taken away, and about three months later died. Then two years after she wrote me that her mother had died. Still later, perhaps as much as six months, she wrote asking if she could come to see me. I replied “ Of course. ” This time, as it seemed to me, she looked much older—had changed more than in

any interval in which she had been away from me. Her face and body were fuller and heavier, more matronly. Not only that, but in her face was a trace of something—could it be a shadow of grossness?—her repressed emotions or desires at last gaining headway? I thought so. But also a sagging resignation which seemed to bode no good for herself—little of the self-confidence which had characterized all of her earlier years.

After a few commonplaces concerning what she had been doing, she came to the meat of her visit—*what to do with her life*. Truly, as she said, she was in a bad way. Her life had all but gone to pieces. Not that she didn't have means or couldn't write—the kind of thing she had always written. But somehow, after her recent experience, that type of thing did not seem so truly representative. (I smiled inwardly but said nothing.) And she hadn't sufficiently found herself in any new way to picture a new type of thing. (I wanted to say: "Emanuela, you have never really expressed yourself as a woman, and so you do not know men and women or life." But I did not say it.) But what was she to do with herself? That was her problem. How to connect up with life? And since I had aided her once before, she had come back. "You see, you have so many connexions. You see life from so many sides. Perhaps you will see what is the matter with me or where I can fit in."

But actually, as I looked at her now, I could not see that anything was to be done. It was too late. She had never functioned properly as a woman, had never seen life clearly. Not only that, but even now, and in spite of her father's and mother's ends and her own sensual and mental defeat, I doubted if she fully grasped her lacks or what they had cost her. Plain it was that there was or had been something missing in her from the very start—no clear vision. But at any rate, why talk of writing or connecting up with life at this late day and when the beauty and the appeal which had made it all so possible had all but vanished?

For a moment I was moved by a desire to make an additional verbal or mental attack—to take a final vengeful fling in repayment for all my futile efforts to reach her. But then I thought, why? And how cruel, when she was so low in

her mood. It was true that throughout the years, and in the face of my various statements to myself and her, I had really wanted to share her life—so much so in those first years—but now . . . ! And through me or herself in relation to me or some other—Scheib, say—it might have come about that she would have better understood life, acquired that grip on reality which would have vitalized the literary or narrative gift that she had. But was that true, either? Could she ever have been any real thing? I doubted it now.

At last I had resort to the old prescription about work being the cure for every ill. She was by no means through as yet. She must not think so. It was too ridiculous. Twenty more good years, at least. Besides, she was so much wiser now. Experience had broadened her in so many ways, and it was foolish to say that she could not interpret life from this new angle. She had the narrative ability. And once she did, would she not find herself—as her own experience in connexion with her earlier writings had proved—in touch with those who would understand and appreciate her new point of view? And would not that compensate and be connecting up with life, as much as anyone could reasonably expect to be connected up with it?

She listened, but I am sure she sensed insincerity or perhaps indifference in what I said. At any rate, after a time she got up, and adjusting her scarf, exclaimed: "Oh, what's the use of life, anyhow? I used to think I understood what it was about, but now I know I don't. And I'm indifferent or not suited to it any more, I guess. I should have married or given myself to you. I know that now, but just knowing what life is really like now doesn't help me. It's too late, I guess."

She did not appear to be looking for additional comments or sympathy, and I did not venture to offer any. As she went out she said: "But I do wish you would come to see me some time. I've sold the place up there and am down here now," and she gave me her address. And I assured her: "Yes, certainly!"

But from that day to this I have never seen nor heard of Emanuela. It may be that she is dead—although I doubt it.

ESTHER NORN





## ESTHER NORN

**S**OMEHOW, when I think of her I think always of a girl of nineteen or twenty, with bright red hair, a face of strong and yet sensitive lines, and much beauty though always pale, and a figure such as most women might envy. In fact, when I first knew her she seemed to have a debonair Scotch presence and manner, as though she were one of those lassies whom Burns had in mind when he wrote, "Green Grow the Rashes, O," but this was more of an appearance than a reality. I believe that she was of Irish extraction, on her father's side anyhow.

Like most girls of her years she was markedly conscious of her beauty and that something about her which made her know that she had a strong appeal for men, although she made no particularly disturbing use of it. She knew, too, that she had a Scotch look and air whether she was from Scotland or not, and that that had an appeal for some. To emphasize this she affected usually a tam-o'-shanter, a Scotch plaid for a throw or a skirt, and shoes if not stockings that had a sturdy, open-air look about them.

There is such a thing as knowing too much about this business of living. One can sense, let us say, even though one is but a girl of eighteen or twenty, that life is a crass and hit-or-miss game, that the race is not always to the swift or the strong or the beautiful, but that time and chance happen to all men and that in the main the maker of life is too strong, too clever and too remorseless for the sons of men. You may guess, say, at seventeen or eighteen, if not earlier, more especially if you chance to be a woman and see how very much in vain some men battle for beauty and some women for love, that men are for ever launching little cockleshell craft upon a limitless and troubled sea that come to nowhere, faring forth early in search of some rumoured and mysterious Atlantis, the blessed isles of happiness, and never finding them. I know that Esther Norn thought of all these things at nineteen and twenty, and later came to think even more darkly of life

though always, curious as it may seem to some, cheerfully. She was always smiling, always ready to discuss any passing adventure or to enter upon it as though it were interesting. I have discussed many such things with her and am convinced that she was well aware of the fact that by some mischance she was born under circumstances that were unfavourable to the best development of herself and her beauty. Her mother had died early and she had been brought up by her father, a sombre, lymphatic, imperfect man who made his living betimes and between much drinking and pursuing of women (to whom he was not very attractive) as a sales clerk and on occasion a floor-walker. In fact, he was one of those men about whom one finds it difficult to say anything, a sort of nonentity with nevertheless a number of destructive vices.

What Esther Norn thought of him I often wondered, for for the most part she would never discuss him. Yet he was about and at one time and another, apparently, dependent upon her. Quite frequently he was out of work.

When I first knew her they were living in one of those narrow, dingy, colourless, ill-lighted, musty flats that used to line both sides of what is now Park Avenue, then as pointless and colourless a thoroughfare as any in New York. For years and years before this, so I learned, her father had found it difficult to sustain either his wife or his daughter in the necessities of life. At the time I met her she was serving as a counter clerk or cashier in a small laundry in that immediate vicinity, although she was already interesting herself in the stage as a prospect and was a twice-a-week instructor in a small dance-hall. But there had already developed a slight weakness of the heart which warned her to guard herself against too strenuous exercise.

Apart from this and a somewhat nebulous and dreamy temperament, it was easy to see that her father was her greatest handicap. So often he was out of work, and at that time she was under the impression that it was her moral duty to stand by him and make as much of a home as she could. It was certainly not much of a home, for neither at that time nor later was she given to interest herself in things relating to the home. The few times I saw her and her father there she seemed to me as one who was living in a dream and who, for that reason perhaps, sensed not too sharply the dreary nature of the life around her.

As it chanced though, I saw nothing more of her for several years (being but a casual visitor in company with one who was much interested in her), and yet during that time I heard not a little concerning her. Poor Esther. Her father was *so* worthless. And here she was, living up in that dark little flat with no one to do anything for her and working all the time to help a father who would never be of the least service to her, who would pull her down really. Now and again I heard that he was drinking, that recently he had lost his place at Stern's or somewhere else (which same he had only a little while before secured), that she was trying to get on the stage, that she liked and read the most interesting books, that her views were unusual and illuminating, and so on and so forth. Because of these things I could never quite get her out of my mind, the quaint picture of youth in poverty, a kind of other-worldliness which she presented in her dingy little flat.

And then after a time I learned from this same friend that she had obtained a very small part in a play—a maid announcing someone, I think. Later I heard that, like so many others, she had found stage work very uncertain as to continuity and to bridge over one period and another of non-employment was working as waitress in a very polite and artistic little restaurant in upper Madison Avenue, the proprietress of which had taken a fancy to her. Next, having moved into Tenth Street (Greenwich Village), I heard of her there as friend and companion of two girls who were conducting a knick-knack art shop for the benefit of the curious and gullible who were already beginning to nose about this area. Then I was told that she had fallen in love with a rich young man, part artist, part loafer, part globe-trotter, and part writer, a person of very fascinating ways who came and went, here and there, in search of pleasure and things to interest him. For a year I heard nothing more as to this. It seems that he had an apartment or bachelor quarters on the borders of Greenwich Village with which she was in some morganatic way—I would not venture to say just how—connected. They were presumed to be in love, I believe. After something over a year of this I heard that he had gone again, Esther remaining in what mood I cannot guess. At that time she and her father were living—or at least her father was—in some even worse

rooms in the upper Forties near Third Avenue. During this year she had been in a play or two, but they had lasted only a little while. I heard that her heart trouble was chronic and irremediable, a weakness of the walls which would not permit her to pursue dancing or to take part in any violent physical exercise but which should not keep her from the stage or at least rôles that were not too strenuous. With such a heart I wondered how ultimately she would make out.

Thereafter I noticed her about the Village, gradually, it seemed to me, becoming a fixture there. How she lived I could not guess. Meeting her on the street one bitter January day and noticing that she was not any too warmly dressed, I reminded her that we knew each other and asked her : "Why not step in and warm up for a moment ? There are two coal fires going in my fire-places." Without a word she turned and accompanied me. She found a white wool rug and sat down cross-legged before one of the fires. I think she remained there for over an hour, scarcely stirring and with scarcely a word to me, neither of us being in any mood for talking. But I noticed how feelingly she dreamed into the fire. She had the poise and the charm of a graven image.

At that time she really did suggest those lassies whom Burns was fond of picturing. Her brow was very white. Her neck had a lovely curve to it. Her hair was such a rich red, and her eyes so blue and still. She was wearing a plaid skirt and a tam-o'-shanter. Now and then, seeing that I had begun to write, she would turn and smile at me, a faint suggestion of a contented smile, as much as to say : "I am very comfortable here and much obliged to you." After an hour she rose, touched her hair slightly before a mirror, and left. When we met thereafter we were friends and occasionally when I met her somewhere alone I would invite her to lunch or dinner. Sometimes—and I always noticed that the thing was done with a clear perception of the friendly and yet curious interest I had in her—she would say : "Why, yes," and wheel and come with me ; or, "No, I can't to-day.. Sorry." And then, with that faint, friendly and yet elusive and almost mocking Mona Lisa smile, she would go on.

I came, without ever understanding her, to like her very much. And, without ever understanding me, I think she

liked me. We could sit and talk about characters in the Village, exhibits, books ; and to my pleasure, though never to my surprise, I found her most definitely and effectively sensitive to all the current moods and theories tied up with the arts and with thought. At this time I gathered that once more she was making some little money by helping occasionally in a restaurant that was artistic and very popular ; also that she was already a part of one of the several Little Theatre movements then current in the Village and by reason of which she came by a little money—I cannot guess how little. When in the Village, as I rather guessed than knew at this time, she would stop with the two girls of the curio place, and when out of it, with her father.

It was about this time, though, that I began to hear of her in connexion with an individual whom I had encountered before and whom I had never been quite able to either like or dislike. To me he was a somewhat disorderly blend of the charlatan, the poseur, the congenital eccentric, and the genius, or honest, sincere, seeking thinker, the charlatan and genius sectors being at times not too clearly discernible. All too often he appeared to me to be an on-the-surface eccentric and clown or court jester. Self-avowedly a poet and a tramp, he was for ever admitting or rather insisting upon the fact that he was a genius. At one time in his career, or so I heard—and from himself if I am not mistaken—he had worn sandals without socks (this in the dead of winter, too), no undershirt, no underclothing of any kind, a coarse wool or cotton workman's shirt open at the neck, no hat, no tie, and not often an overcoat unless he was flush and could afford one or someone gave him one. But when I met him he had returned to shoes and socks, but still no hat and not often an overcoat. Before either Esther or I knew him he had tramped over a goodly portion of the world, always with the least possible effort on his part, and had finally landed in Greenwich Village, only to be heard of in connexion with various eccentric thoughts and deeds. As I saw it, he was suffering from a rabid form of ego-mania which would not permit him to remain quiet anywhere. He must be heard from, either via his costume, his gestures, his speech, or his ideas. Afterward he wrote a book about himself which in a praiseworthy way I must say, set himself forth for what he was : a mixture of the charlatan, the

poseur, the genius, and the honest, sincere thinker and on occasion the dunce or fool. At that time I was rather more than less impressed with the thought that he was a dunce and a clown.

Imagine my surprise then when one day, meeting someone who knew most of the gossip of the Village, I learned that Esther Norn had become enamoured of this jackanapes poet, as had he of her, and that they had married and gone to live in one of those spare, bare rooms which constituted one phase of the various outstanding aspects of the social life of this region. "Yes," declared my informant, with a look and an air of astonishment, "she is actually in love with him and he with her. Of course I can understand his being crazy about her, but what she sees in him is beyond me."

And sure enough, meeting him on the street one morning, he feeling me to be a friend not only to his bride but to himself, I presume, was most effusive in his picturing of his present bliss. He had met her at a party. She had looked exactly like a mediæval Madonna—which in truth she did at times. He had fallen wildly, madly, irrevocably in love with her. Instantly he had rushed home to compose a poem, or many poems, to her, and had rushed back to read them to her there and then. In fact he had dogged her steps and pleaded with her until she had consented to listen to him. For in her, he insisted, he recognized the one woman who could inspire him to the deeds and the verse that were to make of him a great poet. . . . And all the time his thin jean trousers were chillily flapping against his spare, muscular legs. And his shoes, homely and shineless, looked so very trampy. And his hair, long and unkempt, blew about his face. And his rough hands were by no means immaculate. "The wonder!" I thought. "The strangeness of this thing! I can't believe it." And yet somehow I could not help thinking that it was not so horribly amiss that she should have interested herself in him, after all. He was different and arresting, even though eccentric and somewhat eerie. No doubt she detected merits and charms in him which I did not. "The lucky dog," I thought. "This faun has interested an ancient nymph or wood-sprite. This Panling before me in this grey frieze shirt and belted trousers, without coat or hat, may be a better thing than I am, one of the earlier natural figures of the world." One might

almost see horns sprouting from his temples. I could very well guess how he had assaulted her ears with his poetic outpourings, the wild, maundering pleas he must have made.

To top all this came the statement that he was now writing better poetry than ever he had. Also more. And forthwith he extracted from one of his pockets an ode which, in the chill winter wind and without an overcoat, he proceeded to read to me there in the street. Zounds! And yet it was not bad. And he added that *The Independent* had accepted and was about to publish two poems which he had been able to write because of her, also that *The Outlook* and *The Smart Set* were interested in others which owed their inception to her. And he was counting upon the *New York World* to take an article he had written, inspired by her, of course. All told, he had made or stood to make seventy-eight or eighty dollars that coming month, on account of her. A fine flare of genius, to be sure, I thought. Here is certainly the result of true love, the inspiration and the fire it is supposed to induce. Just the same I could not help wondering how they were to make out on seventy-eight dollars a month.

But regardless of what I thought could or could not be done on seventy-eight dollars a month, the thing worked out after a fashion. They took over one of those bare single rooms in the heart of the Village rented to aspirants of one grade and another, but in one of its meanest streets. This they furnished with a bed, a table and a chair, also a mirror for her. Here the poet set up his exceedingly few belongings, his books and writing paper, and behind an improvised wall curtain she hung her few clothes. The first time I called there I was struck with the bareness of the floor and walls. A few old books of the cheapest fourth- and fifth-hand character, but all of them relating to matters of considerable interest, were upon the poet's table, their edges to the wall. A pile of cheap newspaper copy paper, purloined possibly from some newspaper office, showed on what he intended to scribble his great verse. No pictures, no decorations, no hangings. But, for ornament, Esther Norn herself, before whom he seemed always to gesture and genuflect as one would before an image of a saint. And why not? Would I not have done as much—and gladly?

It was Esther here and Esther there, as I soon saw. Esther



had said this, and Esther had said that. Esther, the beautiful, the wonderful, the glorious, had condescended to love him, the uncouth, the unworthy, the tramp. And all this he said before me and others in her presence, bending upon her an appreciative radiant and a to me at times altogether lovely smile. This she returned with a mild and yet understanding look of affection which seemed to say and know that all he had to offer her, as he insisted, was his art, his verse, his adoration. But look you, whoever you were—he was offering her this daily and hourly. Before me and others, in a crazy, extravagant, decidedly uncouth way at times, he would seize her hands and kiss them. Or, being very much taller, he would bend over and kiss her bright red hair or temples. And then, with a queer, arch, apologetic and almost abject smile that was characteristic of him at times, a smile like the vague and wintry mirth of a lunatic, he would add: "Esther lets me do this because she loves me. She knows that I am not worthy of her—only some of the poetic thoughts I think are worthy of her, some of the thoughts she inspires in me, my thoughts of her. They are the only ones that are really worthy of her." And then he would gaze at you and at her as though he expected you to note how really striking and sincere he was, how much the poet, how much he wished that the whole world could see, as though he would give anything to see it all set forth on the first page of the morning paper or before the news-reel camera of a cinema. Queer! as I used to think to myself, and yet although a bit wild—even eerie, still beautiful in its way. As for her, at times she looked at him in silence, curiously, appraisingly, sometimes with a faint smile that might have spelled anything or nothing, or all in one—amusement, contempt, pity, kindly tolerance, affection, even a kind of motherly admiration, such admiration as a mother gives to a cooing, crowing, jumping baby. I used to wonder just what the nature of their private conversations might be. Was it possible for her to reduce him to sanity, or silence even? If she could not, for periods at least, I wondered how she endured him at all.

But this was only one phase of that life. Being an egotist, a wilding-poet, an avowed devotee of naturalism and the uncompromising enemy of all social shams and subterfuges,

it was necessary for him on all possible occasions to indulge in the most direct and oftentimes disconcerting and offensive names and phrases for things for which, long since, society has troubled to discover polite euphemisms. The necessities of the body must be insisted upon in primal words, and one must say how, what, when, where. Naked to the world were all of the relations and actions ordinarily not naked. Recalling her customary reserve and silence, I gathered that (perhaps because of her curiously snivelling, deceptive, recessive father) she had come to look upon such a hearty, open return to the nomenclature of the spade as if not exactly essential, at least tonic. Mayhap, as I sometimes thought, she had become impressed with the necessity for a certain percentage of defiance of sham and convention for which this whole region seemingly stood. Also I think she may have been impressed with the long and seemingly instinctive fight he had made to rid himself of all the vestiges of the commonplace, or rather conventional, his almost insane struggle to be the free, crazy, different sort of thing that he was. And, again, perhaps she liked the publicity, or better yet the notoriety, that attended him, for it most certainly did—even, the considerable talk as to the strangeness, the almost inexplicable nature of this union of theirs. At any rate she endured or accepted all this with that same bland, inscrutable smile, at times seemingly amused, at others indifferent, mayhap even contemptuous. At bottom only he could know or guess whether she ever heartily approved of him, and I sometimes wondered whether he even troubled to do so, so wholly self-centred he appeared to be.

If anyone imagines from all this though that he was deeply or emotionally interested in any arrangement which would keep him from a nightly attendance upon the various Village dining-rooms, theatres and studios in which previously he had disported himself to the amusement if not the interest of all, they are greatly mistaken. As the light to the moth so these to this erratic jack, who must run wherever he might to argue or declaim or be seen. What were home interests to this? In so far as I could gather, each moment of the day and night, but more particularly of the night, was precious from the point of view of publicity—because of the possibilities of publicity for himself that it held. If only he could be seen,

heard, recalled by someone ! If only he could read his verse somewhere ! If only he could rise and denounce some cause or proclaim some theory or shout his approval or disapproval of something ! And then, having done so, a bland, sheepish, almost appealing smile on his face, he would sink to his seat as much as to say : " Kind friends, do but think well of me. I mean so well." You have seen a dog bark savagely and then run forward wagging its tail in the hope of a little approval or petting ? So he. But so human ! One could not help liking him at times for the obviousness as well as the *naïveté* of quite all that he did. A child grown to manhood but still a child.

But to return to Esther Norn. That she was ever a party to these ebullient flitterings and posturings in any aiding or abetting sense I doubt. In fact, on these his many expeditions I heard, as well as often saw for myself, that usually she was not with him. Possessing a profound individuality which called for expression in various separate and direct individual ways, it was natural that she should not be. He must be allowed to run and play by himself. If she was with him at all she was more likely to be off in another part of the room with another group. From the first, and this I noted with interest, she was neither impressed nor dismayed by the vagaries to which he lent himself everywhere and anywhere. Neither was he sufficient of a magnet to her to claim more than a passing nod or smile from her—a gentle and affectionate smile always, to be sure. Wherever they were, together or separate, he appeared to be travelling in one intellectual direction or along one mental groove, and she another. And yet they met on the common ground of affection, I presume. In a little while their goings to and fro were looked upon as a commonplace. Both appeared to remain as before. She appeared to retain her suave and quiet individuality, he his eccentricities, his explosive and bizarre manner and dress. The thing that interested me about this marriage was that it was so different from the one that had gone before. Her first love was so correct, so well dressed, well mannered, well placed, well financed, and she had been in love with him, or so it was said. And yet she had been able to relinquish him without a pang, or at least the public show of one, and had been able to take up with this wilding, this blue-jay

Another thing that interested and puzzled me was how she, having enjoyed a year or so of comparative affluence, could thus turn and return to the level she had endured before. For assuredly this erratic-minded poet had little to offer her other than his adoration ; and I doubt if she took that without some seasoning. She was far too intelligent and sympathetic not to understand not only his best qualities but his worst, and forgive them too. And her comments on him from time to time, to me and others, proved most definitely that she did so understand him. But that is neither here nor there. One thing is certain : with him she had less, very much less, than when she was with the individual who had first interested her. And with that less she endured for a period of some three years or more.

During this time I noted that the few interesting clothes she had come by in her contact with the one man of means she had been in touch with were worn and worn until they were no longer wearable. When they were gone she took to wearing a sturdy dress of brown corduroy and a brown tam-o'-shanter with a brown wool throw of a different shade, which endured and endured until you could have told her anywhere as many as three or four short blocks away. And of course Doane was always the same as to clothing, rough, unshined shoes, no hat, no overcoat as a rule, his frieze shirt always grey and sometimes open at the neck, and in cold weather beating his arms and hands together to keep them warm and yet insisting that he was not cold and that he enjoyed the chill and nip of bitter days, that they made him more active, hence healthier and more poetic. I used to laugh. When he could corner a listener he would deliver a long tirade against stoves and steam radiators and stuffy rooms and pale, lymphatic people. At bottom he was right, very—but too much of it could become a bit tiresome.

Apart from clothes and health and strength, there were the matters of food and rent, and these in so far as I could see were never properly solved during all their days together. He could not or would not do other than write poems for a living, and with her heart, and later her lungs, affected and steadily growing more troublesome, she could not work at anything which required strength. She could not, and I did not blame her. To have seen a flower like that set to an utter

menial task would have been painful. Nature does not intend beauty and spirit for any such purpose, I am sure.

Hence, during all of this time and because of this binding passion, they were hard put to it to get along. How often I have met her, seemingly going somewhere on some important or urgent errand, yet if invited to breakfast or lunch, even to dinner, she would pause in her progress and accept, yet with Doane in the background somewhere but not accounted for. At such times I used to wonder what if anything he thought, whether he complained. And my humble fires—how often during that period did my door-bell ring and there would be Esther in her little tam-o'-shanter and brown corduroy and brown throw. "Busy?" "Not at all. Come on in." And in she would come and throwing off her throw would take a pillow or two and seat herself before the hard coal open fire, studying the red radiance with the quiet, peaceful, comfort-loving affection of a cat. And unless I was very curious as to something I would return to my work, rewarded occasionally for my cordiality by a faint flicker of a smile turned in my direction. If I troubled to ask questions she would answer, all the news that she knew, but with not a trace of irritating criticism or vainglorious gossip in anything she related. Thus I heard of Doane and what he did and what she was doing, and of many others. Betimes she was helping in some Village store, betimes she was rehearsing for a play, betimes she was doing nothing because she was not feeling well. Also I heard of her father and what he was doing. Once I said: "Esther, tell me. Just what do you think of your father? We will admit that you love him as a daughter, but apart from that?" And for answer she turned to the fire, thinking. Finally she turned back. "He is just a clerk, you know," she said. "He has never had any talent for anything but that. And he's been too crazy about women, I think. He couldn't help that, of course, but he hasn't been able to manage them or his home very well. He's never been able to make any money, and now he's getting to the place where he hardly sees how to take care of himself any more. I'm sorry for Papa, but I have never been able to do very much for him."

And sometimes we discussed Doane. She knew that despite all his eccentricities I rather liked him and that I

harboured no criticism of her interest in or her relations with him. "You know," she once said, "I know that you wonder about me and him. I will tell you about that. He is eccentric, a little weird at times. I know that some people think he is a little crazy. And he is a terrible egotist. He just can't help loving publicity and seeing himself as a genius and a strong man. But there is something else there, a love of beauty, and what's more, he is not as strong as he pretends to be. To me he is more like a little boy who is hungry for recognition and sympathy, who is actually crying for a little attention. Sometimes when he is talking loudest and boasting most I see just a little child with very weak little hands hanging on to his mother's skirt and crying, and then I feel intensely sorry for him. I can't help it. I know that he needs me, and I need to help him. I feel better and stronger for doing it."

"Very fine," I said, "but what about yourself? It is sufficient to you that you help him, I presume?"

For reply she nodded in the affirmative, then after a time added: "I could do something for myself if I had the strength, but I really don't know whether it would be more important." We said no more. I liked Doane well enough not to wish him any bad luck.

But just the same I noticed that as with other men so he. In spite of his gratitude to her for her goodness in deigning to notice him, still he could not help but look here and there, occasionally even straying elsewhere, the lust for the beauty of women being very high in him. As a matter of fact, before and after he met her, I never knew anyone whom I thought more beholden to the fair sex for their favour than he. In Esther Norn's presence he was discreet and cool enough. But take him when she was not present—the almost abject craving for the attention of women—and to their faces—a kind of slavish fawning for so much as a look or a smile. This seemed explicable enough in the lusty male not given to protesting too much, but a little thin and even distasteful when considered in connexion with the flowery and melodramatic protestations he was accustomed to make in Esther's presence and in that of others in regard to her.

But before I set forth examples of this I should put down an incident which related to the two of them and in the light of which his conduct was all the more—well, let us say inexplicable, since it conflicted with his mood in this case. About

the time that their union was growing to be a commonplace, say about the end of the second year, and possibly because she had begun to note this defection or because their financial situation compelled it, she set forth in search of work upon the stage and in her peregrinations one day came upon a famous New York manager, an American, with all the variety and colour of his many semi-romantic, semi-realistic productions and the number of stars he had made written large upon him. And in a current, timely way he really was a notable and fairly interesting fellow—with good stage technique if no great power of thought. I knew him quite well. And it interested me to learn, as I soon did, that he was very much taken with Esther, for it was not long, as time proved, before his car, his purse, his influence were at her service had she but chosen to make use of them.

This was the way it had come about. She had drifted into his office with a letter and he, arrested by her personality, had talked very seriously with her. She had beauty, brains, and that elusive something which, he said, appealed to him and to the public. If she were really in earnest and would put herself at his call he would begin that day, forsooth, to provide her not only with a means of livelihood but the training which would eventually land her in a stellar rôle. For he believed in her—her stage possibilities. But in order to train her properly and to suit her time to his, or his to hers, she must be at his beck and call in so far as hours were concerned. To-day he might be in Atlantic City, to-morrow at one of the nearby beaches or at his country place in Westchester or his apartment in town. Wherever he was and he sent for her she was to come. Since she had no means he would see that a car would come to get her and return her to the stage in time (for, to begin with, he proposed to place her in a small part in one of his plays) or her home. But at his beck and call at all times she must be. And she might be called upon to stay wherever he was for days at a stretch in order that he could devote as many spare moments to her training as possible. Before ever proposing all this, however, he had asked her if she were married, and for the practical purposes of the situation she had declared that she was not. Only tentatively, though, had she accepted the opportunity, asking before accepting or rejecting a few days in which to think it over

What followed then, as I myself witnessed, presented one of those curious tangles or cross-currents of emotions and motives such as illuminate once and for all the fol-de-rol character of all life, its inexplicable, disorderly and unfair compulsions, needs, greeds, and reasonless and insane ambitions and inhibitions. For, to begin with, here was Doane, uncertain up to this hour as to whether Esther Norn was as essential to him as she had been (this was to be assumed from his attentions to and admirations for other women, his vehement seeking for their consideration), yet now suddenly deciding that this overture on the part of this manager presaged the certain loss of his beloved for ever and concluding, if you please, that said loss would be irreparable and tragic in so far as his art was concerned, if not his very life. In so far as I could gather from rumours at the time and data that came out later, he fell to begging her not to do anything rash, almost weeping at her feet in abject despair. And then again here was Esther Norn herself, undoubtedly a sane and stable girl reasonably anxious to further herself in some way before it should prove too late, I am sure, and unquestionably dubious as to the enduring nature of this passion of Doane's for her, or of hers for him, yet pausing, so curiously vagrom is the human heart, to consider whether this suddenly aggravated need of Doane's was not after all more worthy of her consideration than this really distinguished offer, and eventually deciding that it was not within her strength or mood or charity to offend against Doane.

Yet, as I later learned, and from herself, no less, the erratic moods of this vagrom poet at this very time were causing her to pause and debate whether he could remain faithful to her or she to him. And he did not remain faithful to her, nor she to him. But I am getting ahead of my story.

The details are as follows : Doane, on first hearing of this offer (without being told all of the conditions which accompanied it, I believe), rushed forth to all and sundry to tell of the great good fortune that had thus suddenly come to his wife and that now and henceforth they were really to be people of some importance. And all this in the face of rotund and wholesale denunciation by him in the past of all and sundry connected with the conventional stage as creatures of so low an artistic level as to be below the notice of anyone.



None the less Esther was now a genius and at last to be encouraged as was her due. Their fortune was to be made and at once. She was to have a small part at once in one of the great Hokum's plays. And he, Doane, I mean—— But harken ! Wait ! Only see ! He was to remain with her, as her this, her that—guide, playwright, what not. She was to get fifty or seventy-five dollars a week now, but only while she was being prepared for a real stellar rôle. Later and soon of course she would be famous and well-to-do. And——and—— In fact, as I came to think from listening to him, he already saw himself in some august position beside her, say, as her manager or impresario, the head and front of her artistic progress, leading her by the hand as it were and at the same time reciting his own poems to admiring throngs who were to be come at through her. Everybody had to hear the news ; I doubt if there was one person in that small artistic realm who did not know of it before nightfall.

But soon a pall, a dark veil of mist, overcasting this bright scene. For, as I gathered afterward, Esther had by then made clear the terms on which this success or opportunity was to be based. There was to be a compromise. She was not likely to see as much of him as she had, for a time anyhow. Indeed, it was not unlikely that in a very little while certain advances would be made by the great Hokum which would tend to eliminate him, Doane, as her husband—unless here and now she chose to put aside and once and for all this brilliant offer. Did Doane wish that ? Would he give her up or would he not ? Did he think it worth while for her to give him up ? Could he do without her ?

As I gathered from others as close to them as I was, at the time this struck him as an outrageous and terrible proposition, cruel, worthy only of one of those dogs of wealth and fame and position who sit at the top in life and do ill to the helpless and so down-trodden. Ho ! only think ! A rich, powerful man like that, a Dives, no less, sitting daily and hourly at his loaded table, gorged to the craw with the fat and luxuries of life, yet into the bargain now attempting to approach and by chicane or treachery take from him, a great if starving world-poet, his one ewe lamb. And Esther, his own Esther, no less, venturing to even consider such a thing ! Jehovah !

Justice ! This scoundrel, this beast, this reveller, this satyr ! (Will someone only loosen my collar from my choking throat ?) With all things at his command, as it were, the world at his feet, yet daring to propose to a poor struggling girl like Esther, this lovely, gentle thing, such a dreadful, such a shameful compromise as this ! Oh, woe, woe, woe ! And he had been and was so fond of Esther. Oh, woe, woe, woe ! To better herself she was expected to yield herself, her priceless self, to such a scoundrel ! And for what ! In order to win the privilege of exercising that innate artistry which was hers ! Horrible—a shameful infraction of all the natural laws of opportunity ! Think of a dog like that attaining to the position in the theatrical world where he could thus dictate the terms of opportunity to a young and beautiful girl of talent ! And think of there being poor girls of genius who might be and no doubt were at times compelled to submit to such outrageous use ! A man such as that should undoubtedly be drummed out of the stage world. He should be exposed for what he was : a scoundrel, a waster of young flesh, a Gorgon, an ogre. Things were certainly come to a pretty pass in this world when such things could be.

At the same time, as I noted for myself, there was a covert sort of pride in him, which sprang from the fact that so powerful and prosperous and important a man (a bounder and an artistic nobody when it came to the higher arts—such as poetry, for instance) should stoop to interest himself in such a girl as Esther.

However, as it turned out, his tears and prayers were effective. Esther quietly gave over the prospect. And Doane, seeing that he personally was now responsible for this sacrifice and that local opinion as such might now be divided as to the wisdom of her conduct and his share in it, was for taking counsel of all and sundry as to whether, after all, he had done the right thing. Was he to blame for thinking and feeling as he did ? Was Esther, regardless of his own moods and fatal pangs, wrong in listening to him or taking his advice ? He even came to me with this proposition and I went over it with him—finally quite flatly stating that if Esther really believed that the opportunity was a great one and that she might succeed she should have taken it. And with this he went away saying that I was right and that no doubt he was

wrong. None the less they began to slip back into their old ways and the incident was soon forgotten. They remained as poor as ever, of course, and Doane after a time—a few months, say six—began to devote himself to other attractive women, in his tentative, seeking, poetic way.

But now followed phases which interested me as much if not more than those that had gone before. During the very hard winter that followed (the third of the Great War) they lived more poorly than ever. As I have said, Doane never had a dollar over and above rent and gas-bills unless he borrowed it. And Esther Norn wore that same corduroy suit but with no warm coat and no suitable shoes and no satisfactory heat in their chamber. Owing to her developing heart and lung trouble she was not strong, and it was during this winter that she took a severe cold which turned into a serious case of pneumonia and eventually into consumption. From this last, I may add, she never really recovered. Yet it was during this very winter (and as much during the severest period of her illness as at any other time) that Doane was about as much as ever, in the restaurants, the little theatres, the studios, and where not else, reciting, denouncing, explaining his plans, putting himself forward as the apostle and the apotheosis of the simple, the abstemious, the sincere, the honest, the kind, the frank, the true, the good even. It was wonderful. And his wife at this very time lying at home, wanting for what certainly may be described as the necessities of life—suitable heat and food, pleasant surroundings, satisfactory clothing, competent medical service. He was no more capable of doing for her, apparently, than was a child. As I saw it, his was a dizzy egotistic form of self-esteem which would not permit him to undertake anything manual or clerical. Worse, he had not yet found himself from a literary and mental point of view and either could not or would not write anything save poetry, and that, in the main, poetry which was not acceptable to the magazines. Throughout the winter I think there were times when they were both underfed and not always warm. A girl that I knew, noting that Esther Norn wore the same dress in season and out, finally bought the material for a dress and made it for her. She wore this for a time but later laid it aside on the ground that it did not look as well on her as the

one she had before. More than once this erratic poet borrowed wherever he could, a dollar here, two dollars there, as much as ten from me once and another time perhaps the same amount. I neither, I may say here, desired or expected a return. It was all a part of village life. But, just the same, wherever and whenever we met thereafter he was for explaining why it was that he had not paid me, until at last I asserted that unless he ceased I would eventually exact payment, whereupon the matter was closed. But that was one of his ways of dramatizing his seemingly pinched life. It was colourful to worry about unpaid bills.

That winter it was, though, that Esther Norn grew very weak because of the pneumonia which could never be dislodged, at least not under the circumstances which governed in her case. Their room was so cold that they were forced to move, and to add to this her father, a by now most anæmic and insufficient person, came to live with them in the two small rooms and bath into which from the other they now moved. Then later and from Doane himself I began to hear tales relative to this new life. Her "old man," as he characterized him, was a this and a that, a loafer, a drunkard, and a what not. He would not work. He had no brains. He had never done anything for his daughter and could not now. "Sure, he pays four dollars a week rent," he once said to me, "but then he borrows nearly all of it back before the week's out, and Esther, like a damned fool, gives it to him. He never pays it to me," he added, with a note of pained regret. On another occasion he stated that he suspected her of lending small sums to her father over and above this. Whose money it was that she loaned he did not say.

But this also was a mere nothing as contrasted with some deeper things which by now had begun to manifest themselves in connexion with these two. For about such a noisy, aggressive temperament as was Doane's there will always gather some who are interested, if by nothing more than a spectacle of activity and unrest. The clown, the performer upon a trapeze, one who keeps eight or ten brightly coloured balls spinning, will most certainly cause many to pause and note. It is better than nothing. At any rate there were a number, men and women, boys and girls, who were interested by Doane. He amused them, and he himself was always hopelessly

fascinated by the spectacle of youth and charm in the other sex. It was not, I think, that he was vastly lascivious. I cannot even imagine that ; but rather that he was fascinated by the thought of love and that he was interesting to women and women were interested in him on that score as well as on the other that he was a poet and a great man, or a prospective great man. And so it was in the cards or the stars that, buzzing around him as he was, there should be one or more who would take his fancy, especially since he was much alone these days.

There was, for instance, one girl, the daughter of a woman doctor whom I knew, a young, pretty, sensual thing, almost as erratic and harum-scarum as Doane himself, who swam into his net. From the girl's mother I learned that she was having a hard time in trying to prevent an affair here. He was fascinated and so was the girl. He was aggressive and the girl not unwilling. To end it all the mother threatened to appeal to his sick wife, which after a time caused him to desist. But he resented this interference on the part of the mother as an infraction of his own and her daughter's rights.

Then there was a tall, graceful, romantic thing who wrote some poetry. She wore changeful and emotional clothes and held changeful and emotional views in regard to freedom, self-development, the need of finding stimulating and enlightening experiences and the like. Either she pretended or enjoyed an affection for Doane which lasted long after Esther was better. It was generally admitted that there was an affectional relationship here, but whether only of the mind or not I cannot say. Of one thing I am sure : It was not of the mind alone toward the last, when Esther Norn was no more. The most interesting of all these divagations on his part which came to my ears was one which appeared to follow hard upon a trip to the country made possible for Esther during her illness by a well-to-do radical, who, however, did not choose to invite Doane. The trip lasted a month or six weeks, during which time Doane remained in the city.

It was during this absence of Esther's though that Doane was busy with another affair, this time devoting himself to a varietistic Venus whose mania for affairs, long before he had arrived on the scene, had attracted much amused attention in this part of the world. Charming she was and intellectual,

but the equal of Esther Norn? Never. But that is neither here nor there. What was interesting to me was that after his great excitement about the manager and hard upon his wife's illness he could follow this hard and laughing and more or less indifferent lady in true troubadour fashion, *on foot*, to some mountains in northern New York, whither she had gone for the summer. "Oh, yes. Leif Doane! What a dear, foolish, crazy boy he is, anyhow. You know he followed me to Granite Lodge on foot last June, the dear boy. He didn't have car-fare, so he walked. But I didn't know that then; if I had I'd have given it to him. But these poets! Sometimes, I do declare, romance can become a little cloying, don't you think? One hardly knows what to do with a cloud-riding poet such as that at times."

Then descriptions, with exact dates.

This was not the only phase of an interesting and to me kaleidoscopic and somewhat bizarre romance. Although after her illness, which lasted for months, Esther Norn was not as strong as she had been, still she was once more up and about. To me she was now more beautiful than she had been. There was something spiritual and mediæval about her very pale face, her red hair, her still blue eyes and her greatly reduced figure and greatly reduced strength. Together they suggested fragility, the delicacy of a flower. The unnatural bloom of her cheeks now, due to the disease that had attacked her and that never after was successfully repulsed, added to her charm. I used to pause when I saw her, arrested by the glow which had already been noted by many.

Naturally I wondered what she thought of her relationship to Doane by now. Did she know? Was she troubled? Or was she unconscious of his mental vagaries? After a time I gathered that she did know. Also that before ever she gave herself to him she had realized fully that he was a weak and variable creature whose attentions could never be wholly confined to herself. For once she said in my presence: "Leif? Oh, yes. I can guess. It's very hard for him to resist pretty women. He has to have attention. He needs it so much." It was during this time that they were living in the small bare suite in Eleventh Street. Sometimes her father was about, sometimes not. Ditto Doane. As before, her poet-husband

or playmate was busy about various things, reciting his latest compositions in the public restaurants that went in for that sort of thing, hanging about the library and dancing floor of the Liberal Club and there emphasizing his greatness to all and sundry or arguing vociferously for strength, sincerity, a Spartan contempt for luxury ; also hanging about the Brevoort, the Lafayette and other expensive places where the *cognoscenti* gathered, and in these spending in a grand manner whatever small sums of cash he could come by ; and then borrowing, visiting the various editors with his poems, or working betimes at some task or other in connexion with one of the minor theatres of the district. The more I thought of him and Esther Norn the less I could understand how to herself she justified her refusal of the great manager.

But then on the heels of this came one of the most curious developments of all. To really understand you would have to know the world of parlour radicalism, anarchism, socialism, communism and progress as it relates to self-development or, better yet, self-advancement generally. It is easy to rattle off words of dim or pseudo import. But to have known, as have I, the many men of means and university degrees who by reason of an inheritance or the gift of making a comfortable living in a leisurely or crafty way, such as the law or trade, or what you will, are thereby enabled to set up as authorities in the arts, economics, politics and reform and to pose as patrons or saviours of the masses, the downtrodden, etc., is to have known the very substance of futility or craft, or both. It has been an interested privilege in my case to have known and observed from time to time one and another of these, but among them none more closely than J. J.

We will admit, firstly, that he was a man of broad understanding, sensitivity, and some learning, yet intellectually convinced of the futility of everything—life, death, energy, faith, disillusion, men—whatever you will. A cold light, as it were. At times he appeared to wonder why he or anyone else chose to exist. On the other hand, he appeared to be sufficiently sound and vigorous and voracious materially or physically, as to enjoy himself hugely, to eat, drink and make merry with the best. To do him justice, though, in the course of a number of years, he had written a series of social

studies which were of considerable interest, even if they got nowhere nor threw any definite constructive light on anything. Somewhat laboured, they were still interesting as pictures. Finding in frequent periods of intoxication relief from a mental ennui that followed upon contemplating things as they are, he had become a little marked by that. Also temperamentally a gourmand, he was stout, but still attractive. At the time Esther Norn came to know him he was still industriously searching out new and peculiar surroundings under which to live and enjoy himself. Also, although married and the father of four children, he was not above varietistic experiences and turned now to one and now to another of the opposite sex, seeking always, I am sure, freedom from ennui. New affectional contacts were common with him, the ever-illusioning fevers of passion and romance.

With all this I must add, curious as it may seem, that he was a little close where money was concerned. Several disastrous investments and the knowledge that he had no plan for making additional cash out of the money he had inherited, had made him almost unduly cautious. But in spite of this and due to the fact that contact with the other sex seemed to set up an enlivening flame in him, he interested women who off-hand, one might have said, would not have wasted a look upon him. Although his residence and his family were in the country—a most rural estate, by the way—he was frequently to be found about the restaurants and resorts of the radical section of the city. Indeed, he was known to and not on bad terms with scores of those who were interested in the arts and letters. And anent the various economic and social agitations of the day it was most interesting to listen to him. He could talk, and talk convincingly. In short, he was looked upon, by radicals or at least the pseudo-radicals of the world about which I am writing, as very interesting and very well-to-do, but cautious and dilettante, a parlour or library radical.

I have drawn him thus at length because of the marked part he played in the closing aspects of Esther Norn's life. Up to this time he had not met her, but he had known of if he did not actually know her husband. In regard to Doane he once observed to me that he was a person in whom he could not possibly be interested. He was an ego-maniac, too futile,



one who possessed no genuine *flair* for the arts. But a part of this lack of appreciation might have sprung from the fact that at that time Doane was young and he was already forty-five or fifty and grey. And Doane was fantastic and physically active, whereas by now J. J. was inclined to be lethargic and mentally sober.

Let that be as it will. After the crisis in connexion with the celebrated manager through which Doane and his wife had come, and after Doane's several tentative approaches and retreats here and there, J. J. appeared as the friend and occasional companion of Esther Norn. And then, after a few months, there floated here and there reports of an intense and profoundly emotional affair which these twain were undergoing. At first I could scarcely believe this. The difference in their ages, their temperaments—or at least as I judged their temperaments at the moment. Later, thinking of Doane, and then her first love and her father, I was not so sure. For a time anyhow, and if you please, they disappeared, but only to reappear later in the world with which both were so familiar. But in so far as I could learn there was no change in the domestic or other arrangements which still existed between Doane and Esther and her father. None. All lived in the same place as before, only now they were rarely seen together. Interestingly enough, J. J., in addition to his place in the country, had now taken a floor in one of the more pleasing parts of the Village and from time to time he and Esther Norn were to be seen together.

But to me, psychologically and practically, the thing had so many quirks and twists that I could not let it alone. To begin with, there was the individual with whom she had been in love before ever she had known Doane, a presentable and interesting man, self-contained, fairly liberal, and obviously respectable and kindly. Then there was Doane, bounding and alive, if unreliable and helpless. Then there was the manager, really the most able and artistic of all and the one who could have done most for her, whom she had rejected for Doane. And now this interesting but rather unstable and changeable J. J.

And by him most of all in this particular instance was I impressed. For, to sum up J. J., one would have said that at his time of life and with his changeful, restless and kaleidoscopic past, to say nothing of his present family ties and social inhibitions, he had nothing to offer any young and attractive

woman. Admitting brains, position and means, still, by reason of a strain of *caste* that ran through all his thoughts and actions, almost anyone could have detected that he would do little more than condescend to any relationship which did not spell some social advantage to himself. In short, such a point of view was little more than second nature with him. By birth, training and that freedom which sprang from means liberally provided by his parents had he come to feel that he belonged to a world above and apart from the common herd. And that common herd included all who lacked means and position, even such a girl as Esther, say. At the same time, as I have tried to indicate, a certain liberality of mind or temperament had caused him to seek out and interest himself in such especial figures of the mass as chanced to show that they had thoughts and aspirations apart from the level on which they had been born. Finally there is this to be said for him : he did not look entirely like one whom self-satiation had caused to become cruel or indifferent to the moods or needs of others. He still had an easy, genial, play-dog air which was most deceptive. To not a few it concealed the fact that he was as self-centred and as indifferent spiritually as it is humanly possible to be. And in proof of this I was quick to note that on the material side Esther was not profiting by this contact. Rather her bleak social and material life seemed to go on as before. She lived, ate, dressed about as before.

Meeting her on the street one day during the height of this affair, I fell in with her and we walked a little way together. She was silent for a time, but a hundred paces farther on she said : " You can't help thinking of me and J. J., can you ? " " No, I can't," I replied. " Well, just to make it a little clearer to you, I count it a wonderful experience, one of the most wonderful of my life and most helpful to me. I felt you might not understand. But this is true." " I am prepared to believe it," I replied. " I presume like Doane he needs you as much as you need him." " I don't know as to that. I only know that I need him. I need the mental lift he gives me." I have often thought of that since. No doubt it was true.

But later J. J., learning of this encounter, I presume, came to my door, bearing a bundle of short essays or prose poems which, to my surprise, he proceeded to unfold, whereupon I

discovered that they related to Esther Norn and himself, his love for her and hers for him. "I wish you would read these, or let me read them to you," he said. "You will understand them. And Esther wanted me to show them to you. I've been writing them from time to time during the last six weeks." I took them and read, one, ten, a score, then paused, for I saw the drift of all of them. They were semi-philosophic, semi-erotic and in certain ways highly romantic discourses on love and beauty and the deeper or esoteric meaning of passion and character, yet relating specifically to at the same time that they attempted to elucidate the various shades or moods of this great emotional tie which had sprung up between Esther and himself, their respective spiritual or poetic attitudes toward beauty and the mental or psychic call that had drawn them together. According to him Esther was marvellous—a "world soul"—a true flower of the spirit, and these effusions of his the finest, the most mature and the most beautiful of all his mental flights so far. (The wonder of emotion, I thought ; of passion ; of sex, the great, the dominating force !) And actually they were very good, some of them splendid. Quite obviously they were inspired by a chemic something which had refreshed and revived J. J.'s imagination and hers, for the time being anyhow. In a different way from his ordinary or more sober and philosophic approach to life, as I saw it then, he was attempting to do what Doane had sought to do before him—express the passion and delight with which Esther Norn had inspired him. Only Doane's way was to dance about and kiss her hands and cry : "Esther lets me do this because she loves me. She knows that I am not worthy of her—only some of the poetic thoughts I think are worthy of her." Whereas J. J.'s way was to compose semi-sober and philosophic papers or essays, each aglow with a sombre, fading resigned tenderness that was shot through with an aching fear of conclusion. I felt sorry for him, for I felt that so great an emotion at this time must be to him, if not Esther, an enormous and perhaps destructive psychic strain. He could not burn so fiercely and live.

Our Anglo-Saxon world is, I think, much too cold toward and even intolerant of any expression of the love or creative passion after the years of eighteen to thirty. Apparently it sees but dimly, if at all, that years do not destroy the passions

of the heart or brain, or if it does it prefers to deny and repress. If life is so, it should not be and hence, as I chance to know, J. J. was the subject of much chilly speculation and comment just at this time. Esther too for interesting herself in him. None the less J. J.'s years had left him with real ability. Mentally Doane could not hope to cope with him. For that reason, and to me at any rate, it was interesting to note all this and for the life of me I could not help thinking what a curious and different sort of girl this must be who could if not at once at least so violently interest two such very different men and could be interested by them. Most certainly here must be some spiritual or poetic values over and above the animal. And she had discovered them to Doane and J. J., possibly to others who had interested her; and all of them were more respectable in my eyes for having been able to interest her.

But this again was something that was destined to fade into thin air, as does all romance, apparently, whether violently interrupted or unimpeded or not. In this last case, I presume, this process was all the more quickly aided by the practical and conventional considerations which affected J. J. His was a nature which was certain to weary of anything. Once they were over, such affairs as this, however violent or emotional their nature at the time, were listed as curious or valuable mental or emotional reactions, according to the measure or character of the artistic or intellectual stimulus he had received at the time. Such-and-such an affair here, there or elsewhere had provided him with such-and-such conclusions or deductions. I do not believe that Esther Norn was either so cool or so precise in her intellectual summation of her life and affairs.

However that may be, the lapse of a year suddenly brought a crisis in the affairs of J. J. which served to darken or rather change this moving and poetic situation for him. His oldest boy, a loving, intelligent and yet romantic youth on whom he doted and whom he had placed in a western technical school, was suddenly blotted out by some contagious disease, and that before either of his parents could reach him, and that when this affair with Esther Norn was still at high tide. This sudden blow dealt to him by life seemed to have a most disturbing effect upon him, more than I would have anticipated. As it was a profound and dark despair enveloped upon him, so

dark and so crushing as to cause him to pause and in a vain and, as I saw it, decidedly weak emotional state to seek to revalue all his values. Was he right in leading the life that he had led? Was individualism as opposed to socialism in the affectional sense all wrong? His philosophic and practical deductions in regard to all he had seen here on earth, what about them? One night at about ten o'clock in my old Tenth Street studio I was suddenly confronted by a morbid and weeping man, old and desolate-looking and slightly the worse, I am sorry to report, for having taken refuge in drink. And now brokenly telling me of this his perhaps first great, psychic shock. His boy! His boy! Bereft! Bereft! Shaken to the very roots of his being, apparently, he was moved to question (after the fashion of the religious "sinner" of old) the spiritual or ethical relationship of all his past deeds to himself, his children, his wife, life, or the controlling forces of the universe. Perhaps, as he now said to me, and with wet eyes, there was something more than accident to the theory of conduct and relationship or duty now holden by so many in the economic and social stresses of life. Perhaps, if not a God, at least something, some chemic or psychic balance, concealed in all things and making for responsibility and order, or the necessity for them. Might it not punish evasion with a Karma-like retribution, and here and now rather than later. In other and simple words, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay."

Truly we can admit that from every deed proceeds the impulse or force thereof. Yet to where exactly? And the sum and substance of many despicable actions may possibly tend to inferences as to despicability in oneself and others wherever intelligence reigns. I am free to admit as much, and was at that time. But I was not quite willing to admit that primarily man, the lorn single individual rooted so deeply and inextricably as he is in the forces that underlie and bring him into being and motivate him so mechanistically, could be so completely responsible for all that he does, feels, is driven to feel. Why not life? God? Electrons? Protons? Electricity itself. Why not? Mechanism plus behaviourism, as you see, had seized upon me. Yet seeing so much and saying so much, I could not quite respect the cringing back-fire of such a mood as this. While I did not blame him entirely,

I could and most certainly did hold in contempt the concatenation of forces and moods and chemic emanations or arrangements which could bring about such a blubbering recession from moods which but an hour or a week before were so diametrically opposed to all this. Much as I really loved his boy and sorry as I felt for him and his wife, I could not help saying as much. And I could not help but contrast his deep sensitiveness to this his personal loss with his ordinary urbane and genial dismissal of all the woes of others as economic and chemic movements which at bottom could not really be the deep concern of anyone. We did not quarrel exactly but from me he got not so much emotional support as he probably expected and soon left.

But the blight which this cast upon his relations with Esther Norn from now on was of interest. A curious and almost impalpable change, this. For a month or more after his boy's death he was to be found only about his country place, to which the body was brought. And later, once he did appear, he was of a different and soberer mood than of yore. He even seemed to have aged greatly. Unquestionably a marked tendency toward a varietistic if not orgiastic form of living had been replaced by a desire to do differently, for the time being anyhow. In the course of time it was to be observed that he spent less of his time with the one who had so recently proved so profound and shaking an experience, and more and more with the family he had hitherto placed secondary to his other adventures. That he entertained and retained a sincere and kindly affection for Esther, I know. Throughout a later period, which was now fast approaching, he was of some financial if no great affectional service to the one who had lately interested him so intensely.

But following this psychic smash and with his going Esther Norn appeared to find her individuality once more and was again to be seen about the old haunts that had known her. And about six months after the death of J. J.'s son she was once more playing a very small rôle in one of the local theatres but not with any too much strength, for it was understood that not only was she afflicted with consumption which could not be made to yield, but that her none too well constructed heart was giving her more trouble. Finally, at the end of a very warm and depressing summer, she was ill again, this time

irrecoverably, with a combination of rapid lung deterioration and a disturbingly weak heart.

This news spread. For Doane, ever impecunious and in need, was not backward in making plain the hard physical lines upon which Esther had fallen. She was very ill. It was doubtful if she could ever recover. And her "old man" was of no use to her; he did not even pay his own board. And as for himself, he had only sold two poems to so-and-so for five dollars each in a month, and but one to so-and-so for three. And upon these he would not be able to realize for some time to come. So in the meantime—— Need I suggest what, in the meantime? Decidedly though there was something moving if irritatingly pitiable about it all. For one could not help but think of Esther Norn, with her delicate white face, her blue eyes, her bronze hair and her dreamy, speculative conception of life and things, lying in a shabby room without the comforts of an ordinary clerk or labourer.

And just why J. J. did not come to her rescue during this period puzzled me not a little. For and although I had always thought, and felt, that having been born to wealth and position in the first instance, and being of a peculiarly self-centred and coldly speculative turn of mind in the next, it was not possible for J. J. to see a third or fourth person in any but a remote and somewhat mathematical or speculative light, still there were those poems addressed to Esther and his enormous concern for his own boy. None the less it was only when the state in which Esther now found herself had become one for general comment that J. J. came forward, along with some others, with a plan for the amelioration of her condition. It was suggested by one and another that she be sent to a sanatorium for consumptives, out of the noise and dust of New York, where she might have a fighting chance. And here eventually she was sent, at his expense, I believe, but not before others not as closely related to her had made it possible for her to be transferred to more commodious quarters nearer Fifth Avenue.

It was at this last place that I really last saw Esther. And even here were Doane and her father living with and presumably taking care of her. I wish I might believe as much. Yet at this time J. J. was confining himself almost exclusively

to his estate on the Hudson. And as for Doane he was out and around at the various restaurants, parties, studios, this, that, with which the Village was, and I assume remains, dotted—rarely, if ever, at home. But composing poems, plays, speeches and what not else. And conducting as I recall a most unprofitable one-man theatre. But just the same each time that I visited Esther she was cheerful and smiling and this in the face of the inevitable disaster that was stalking her. Positively she seemed to me to be of that same high spirit that is presumed to characterize the healthy and the successful everywhere. She breathed neither indifference nor resignation nor despair nor yet the least trace of discontent or dissatisfaction, but a kind of smiling superiority and ease which spoke more of well-being and position and comfort than anything else. In all my experiences I had never contacted anything more serene.

And yet she did not think she was going to get well. Her thought was that she was not, or that it did not make any difference. Waving aside the flowers or the fruit that I troubled to bring, she would begin a discussion of something—a book, a play, some æsthetic Village movement, or the actions or point of view of some individual in the world. Hers was a naturally intuitive and forceful mind that understood without effort. Hers was a neo-esoteric, or as the spiritualists have it, an “old soul.”

But during this time, also, I occasionally met J. J., but more in the Village restaurants and thought-resorts than in this apartment. Also, as I have said, Doane. And throughout all this the attitude of Doane toward J. J. and of J. J. toward Doane was characteristic of each. Doane, as I was half amused to see, feigned not to know of the relationship that had existed between J. J. and Esther and yet spoke of both, of Esther with the consideration due one to whom he was genuinely obligated, of J. J. in or with the mood of one who admits that a man may be of some force or worth intellectually but beyond one's liking just the same. On the other hand, J. J. never did bring himself, and could never have been brought for that matter, to manifest any interest in or even to mention Doane. The poet was not of his world. At worst or best he was too erratic, too childish, too lacking in politeness and intellectual *savoir-faire*. In J. J.'s eyes Doane



was an unimportant reformer or agitator, but in a weak sense—not one of those threatening labour strugglers in whom he was always genuinely interested. And to Doane J. J. was a snob.

The end of it all came, as I may say, with Esther's eventual transfer to a sanatorium among the pines of northern New York, where for six months she lingered and then died. I never saw her there, but those who did continued the picture of one who appeared to live in a dream, ignoring the material considerations of life and thinking on beauty. She liked to read poetry and began to sketch, a branch of the æsthetics in which she had never dabbled before. The last thing she did on that day she died, or so I heard, was to write over and over the name of the erratic poet she had married and to sketch his head with certain flourishes and modifications which made it less erratic and more appealing. None the less, as I also heard, he visited her but once—he who in the hey-day of another affair could troubadour-wise follow his lady love on foot all the way to the Berkshires, there to strum his adulations in her ears—if ever he did strum. His excuse—and possibly this was a respectable one—that he lacked the means wherewith to exist there. But then J. J. appeared but once. After her death, however, and after he had caused her body to be returned to New York for burial, he did send flowers and did defray all expenses. Being involved with some affairs in the West at the time, so it was said, he could not come.

As for Doane. On hearing that her last thoughts were of him he was much wrought up, so I heard, shaken with a fusion of intellectual and emotional sorrow “plus satisfaction” as someone troubled to say of him at the time—sorrow over the fact that so bright a thing as his and Esther's relationship had to fade, satisfaction that after all and notwithstanding she had still held him within the circle of her interests and sympathies. Years later, when he was living very much alone and not as much regarded by many as in other days, he is said to have said to someone: “Esther was the only real inspiration I ever had—the finest thing in my life.”

That I am prepared to believe.

BRIDGET MULLANPHY



## BRIDGET MULLANPHY

I THINK of her always as an integral part of one of those blowzy, ashcan-decorated thoroughfares of New York's lower West Side, grey granite blocks paving it, dirt and garbage lying disgustingly uncollected, a dead cat or dog, maybe ; dirty children ; dirty, dark hall-ways giving into the respective walls at regular intervals ; a ruck of trucks and carts clattering to and fro ; but at the end of the bright North River, a metal stream, flowing at the base of the Palisades, which rise like a grey wall above it, and above that a grey or blue sky, ribbon-wide.

On the low step gracing the sidewalk entrance of one of these squalid tenements, Mrs. Mullanphy, grey-haired, burly, squarish rather than rotund, a slight indentation at the middle of her sleeveless "wrapper" indicating a former waist-line, almost always tied around with a dirty, faded gingham apron. She has been sweeping and is now resting upon the handle of her broom. A slattern of a girl in a green blouse and brown skirt, holding a baby on one arm, is talking to her. I am about to address her, Jimmie, my man of all work, having deserted me these several weeks, when the following scene takes place :

MRS. MULLANPHY (*looking along the hall toward an invisible stair—invisible because of shadow—and then up at a second- or third-story window*) : The likes of them ! The likes of them ! It's them that is the clean ones, is it, with a peck of dirt under the bed and the same blanket from one year's end to the other ! 'Tis never they have a blanket on the line. (*A head appears at one of the upper windows, second story left. It is a big head, broad-faced between parted wings of dark red hair. Its owner wears a triangle of red-and-brown-squared shawl—a small shawl in no way protecting an immense bosom held in by a nightgown or "wrapper."*)

RED HEAD : And who is it that talks of dirt, with ashes

under the stove—pans of them—and fish heads on the floor ! And the health department wonderin' at the sickness in the block ! (*The head disappears.*)

MRS. MULLANPHY (*looking up defiantly and shouting*) : The health department, is it ? The health department ? And with yer own child after dyin' from dirt and little else. 'Tis diphtheria that comes from dirt, and nothin' else. And yer old man out of a job three months out of four. And yer son that drinks till 'tis himself that can't find his way through the hall and up the stairs at night but must be fallin' against the doors of other folks when they're tryin' to sleep. (*To the girl who is holding the baby*) : 'Tis a bit warm, ain't it ? (*Then giving a square rag of a carpet an extra flick with her broom.*)

THE GIRL WITH THE BABY : Yes, it is. Terry ! Terry ! Come away from that dead cat !

RED HEAD (*reappearing at the window above*) : 'Tis me son, is it ? And work, is it ? And your old man out of work these three months now, and scabbin' in the place of better men when he does. And where is the cup of sugar borried of me these six months and not returned yet ? And before that, me salt and me starch ? (*The head disappears.*)

MRS. MULLANPHY : Out of work, is it ? And you with yer darter on the streets of the city this day ! And with men runnin' to where ye lived before till it was the vice society that was called in and yerselves put out by the police ! And no rent, and yer furniture put out ! Where is the can of coffee I loaned ye six weeks this Monday ? Salt, is it ? And yer darter out to get money from men and yer drunken son fallin' through the halls !

So there you are ! I would not, I assure you, present this, nor much that is to follow, save for the strange irritability of it all ; the vague, blundering, I might even say fantastic, and reasonless pother and ado that *is* life, here as well as elsewhere. And what the meaning or purpose of the creative force when it could descend to such fol-de-rol and nonsense as this, I used to ask myself on observing and listening to such a scene.

But let us return to that same doorstep a few months later.

Now it is a cold, grey, almost dark November afternoon. I am again on my way to engage Mrs. Mullanphy to do some cleaning for me. I encounter little Delia Mullanphy, aged four (although the eldest daughter of this household is in her thirties), playing house with a little boy in the dust and dirt of the sidewalk under an arc light blazing thus early on this dusky afternoon.

"And now ye're to come home at six, see?" the child is saying as she rises and pushes her little boy companion away to give him a good start on his home-coming. And he, once strategically placed as a home-comer, comes swaggering and staggering, but listen.

"Ain't dinner ready yet, hey? You——! It's six o'clock and there ain't nothin' on the table, eh! I'll give you a punch in the jaw, you!" And with this making a vigorous, if childish, lunge. But at this strenuous point in the game I choose to interrupt with an inquiry. It is all so realistic that I fear he will strike her, wondering at the same time how two such infants come by such knowledge as this.

The second floor front right as you go up is occupied by Mrs. Mullanphy, her husband, thirty-year-old daughter and four-year-old daughter. Mullanphy *père*, as I understand from Mrs. Mullanphy's irrepressible patter, works very occasionally as a teamster. He works, that is, when the spirit moves him. Cornelia, the elder daughter, as I also occasionally hear from my talkative cleaning woman, works out at times; at other times she sews at home. Mrs. Mullanphy herself, scrubs, washes, anywhere and everywhere, as the spirit or necessity moves her. For Mullanphy, as I also well know by now, is exceedingly unreliable—a temperamental and in the main befogged Irishman who seems in part to be afraid of and in another part not to consider or be moved by his wife in any way. In truth, I cannot exactly explain how this is—a sort of marital enigma which I have never been able to solve for myself. As I ascend the stairs, however, I hear a voice, unmistakably that of my cleaning-lady, and I stop to listen to the following:

"And who is it that talks of family? Is it the Finnertys? God knows what they sprang from! Family, is it? With a son in the protectory! 'Tis me fond boast that a Mullanphy

is as good as anyone, and better. They can be looked up for what they are these hundreds of years back."

(Upon my word, I thought! Such noble lineage! This is a cleaning-woman worth having.) But then came the reply, hurled down from an upper window and treasured by me to this day:

"'Tis yer proud boast, is it? And your nieces carryin' things to ye that don't belong to them! 'Tis the police that should be told of it! And yerself pretendin' to be the mother of a child not yer own! Ye old harridan! And 'tis well we can guess whose it is! And who's the father of yer darter's child? And where is he? And why isn't she with him this day, and the child, too? A widow, is it? A foine widow! And her and yerself leavin' Barry Street and no father there! Widow! And she the young lady yet, still lookin' for a man! Foine family, is it? Heaven preserve the rest of us from such foineness!" The voice died heavily away.

But enough of the long rigmarole of charges and rejoinders that invariably flew about these tenement rooms and halls, principally, as I was always pained to note, between Mrs. Mullanphy and her neighbours whenever I was in that region. How flesh and blood could continuously endure them is beyond me. My own interest might honestly be said to have been literary. I was so thoroughly fascinated by this outspoken Irish realism, which nowhere else apparently could I find in such undiluted and plentiful quantities, that I liked to come here. Otherwise not. For as I had already observed of other nations and races, they were much more secretive. But the Irish never. On the contrary, in such a world as this, it did seem as though all of the customary reserves and punctilio of better neighbourhoods or ordinary social life anywhere no longer held. Either they had never existed for those who dwelt in this environment or they had broken down. And in addition, whatever the reason—poverty and lack of training in the amenities being the principal ingredients, I am sure—a state of troublesome and devastating espionage and criticism held. No one could do anything that was not more or less the subject of observation and comment. At the slightest indication of exclusiveness, public opprobrium and denunciation

seemed sure to follow. Such a thing as privacy could scarcely be said to exist. Having so few mental employments, those who dwelt in these gaunt sties and pits of the world had little beyond vagrom and errant notions in regard to life, and spied and quarrelled from sheer ennui. They could not think sanely and consecutively. Their interests, vivid enough at the moment, were, after all, mere mental flutterings. They were concerned only with what was immediately before them, the things that at the moment they could see, hear, taste, smell, feel. A low order of animal life, most assuredly, and yet interesting as animal by reason of the sharp contrast afforded to the more ordered and constructive superimposed intellectual life of other regions.

But now as to Cornelia Mullanphy, the thin, amiable and yet eccentric, anæmic and high-strung daughter who, if such taunts as Mrs. Finnerty's were to be believed, was the true mother of the little Delia Mullanphy whom Mrs. Mullanphy claimed to be her own. Because of fear of scandal in this region, no doubt, as well as, possibly, previous neighbourhoods in which the family had lived, the parentage of Delia had to be concealed. I am not sure. At any rate Cornelia was perhaps thirty-three or four, and not so ill-looking. Being neglected and lonely, she would occasionally, as I often had the chance to observe for myself, leave the corner ordinarily occupied by her and her sewing machine, to visit one of the neighbours. Then would her mother's wrath pour down upon her on her return :

"Keep out of yer neighbours' rooms, you ! Isn't it them that's laughin' and makin' fun of us the while ? Indeed, it's Katie Tooney herself, her that ye think is yer friend, that only last week was callin' down fer all the neighbours to know that ye're not married but a man's plaything and that Delia's not my child but yours !"

"It's a lie ! It's a lie !" flared Cornelia furiously. "She never said it, and you know she didn't. You make up lies—you with yer church ! Have you no peace ever ! Shut yer jaw !"

"Shut me jaw, is it ? Yer own mother, and me that took ye back when ye had no one, when ye couldn't get a man to look at ye ! It's me that's to shut me jaw, is it ?"



But in spite of Mrs. Mullanphy's raucous family and neighbourly controversies, she could be as careful and silent about my place and among my spare belongings as anyone could wish. Indeed at times my humble effects seemed positively to overawe her, especially such things as paintings, candelabra, silver-ware. There was one painting in particular, a large and well-composed nude after the manner of the neo-impressionists of 1912, which seemed actually to terrify her. Curiously enough, in her world the nude, in the form of prints, illustrations and paintings, was plainly taboo. Perhaps her church or priest condemned them. At any rate I cannot recall that ever I saw her give this particular picture one direct glance, unless it was the first one. Invariably she passed it, where it hung above a low shelf of books, with averted face and downcast eyes. The frame might need dusting, and the objects on the shelf below it, yet although everything else in the rooms was scrupulously cleaned and polished by her, these things were left untouched. She objected to the painting. It disagreed with her. Or if not that, as I have said, her church did not countenance such things.

Considering her amazing tempers and moods, however, her church, as it seemed to me, appeared to have an almost uncanny and even amazing hold on Bridget. She was a devout Catholic, blending, to my confusion, always, a kind of blind animal faith in her religion with the temperamental, material, and as I often thought, pagan notions and actions that elsewhere governed others who were wholly pagan. In short, oil and water mixed.

And because of this I once ventured to interrogate her as follows :

"Mrs. Mullanphy," I said, "I notice that you go to church very regularly. You must be a good Christian."

"And why not?" she bristled. "'Tis from me church that I gets me stren'th. And if it wasn't for me faith, I couldn't go on at all, 'tis that hard on me life is."

"True enough," I agreed. "Life does press hard on most of us. But I notice that in spite of your religion you have a pretty rough time of it where you are. Are all your neighbours so bad?"

"And am I to hold me tongue and that bein' said about

me that's not so?" she demanded, her choler rising. "'Tis not within morshall (mortal was what she meant) patience. 'Tis not human." And she brandished the handle of an oil mop then in her hand as one might a spear, at the same time crumpling a dusting-cloth in the other hand as though it were something tangible with which to fight.

"I know, I know," I said placatingly. "No doubt they say a lot of things about you they shouldn't. Everybody has to endure that sort of thing. But how about what the Bible says about loving your neighbour as yourself, and turning the left cheek if someone smites you on the right. Doesn't that command you to keep the peace?"

"The Bible! The Bible!" she blurted defiantly. "Sure, and I know me Bible as well as anyone, and better." (I knew she could not read.) "And I know what me church says about it, too. I can get the straight of it from me priest any day. But what about me neighbours lovin' me and lettin' me alone when I'm not doin' anything to any of them, bad end to them! Will ye tell me that? 'Tis the Bible itself says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and I'm not forgettin' that either. 'Tis in the same book."

"Very true," I agreed. "It does say that. But this other is what Jesus said. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is from the Old Testament. But Jesus said that He was giving a new law."

"And 'tis not anyone that need be tellin' me, fer 'tis well I know it," she replied pugnaciously. "But who'll be sayin' that I'm not within me right in defendin' me own? Isn't it meself that is for ever tryin' to keep the pace wherever I am, loanin' of me salt and me coffee and me butter and the suds of me wash or the boilin's of me meat? Sure, and there would be none better than meself as a neighbour did I have them about me that had the sense. 'Tis better than this I was used to before I come to where I am to-day—the roilin's and scrapin's of New York."

"You were better born, you mean?"

"Indade and I was. The scrapin's that I have to live with this day."

"Quite so, quite so," I dishonestly soothed. "I can see

that you are better than those about you, and that you do better too, really."

"Well, I'm not meanin' to say that I'm that much better than another. But sure, I'm not called to do more than me best nor more than any other. And the Lord Himself never intended that anyone should be more than human. He'd never have made a purgatory if He had."

"Grand," I thought. "The acme of logic. What more need I say now?" And so desisted. But hers, as you may see, was a typically confused, evasive and pagan mind coated over by a lot of religious dogma which she did not really comprehend but which she sought to blend in some confused way with the sordid routine of her daily life. Yet, as anyone could also see, the blending went hard. Still, heaven, I am sure, was a real enough place to Mrs. Mullanphy—the heaven of a patriarchal whiskered God, the Father; of the Jesus of the mediæval pictures, and the kindly Virgin of the starry crown and lilies. If she has since died and not found them seated upon a throne and surrounded by clouds as she imagined them to be, then there is one very much troubled and puzzled Irish spirit roaming about somewhere in space.

But I speak of this religious tendency not irreverently or to poke fun, as some may think—I am too sorry for blind, stumbling, seeking humanity to do anything of the sort—but because this profound religiosity of hers contrasted so oddly with her general outlook and method of procedure; with the grand frays and ebullitions of temperament that were the order of each week, excluding Sundays, which as I know were more solemnly observed—Mrs. Mullanphy attending mass and observing her other church duties with a regularity which all Catholics would no doubt look upon as commendable.

Yet in order to round out this decidedly Hogarthian atmosphere, I am, perforce, and almost against my will, compelled to introduce two other persons connected with her, and when I would so much prefer to describe her only. Those same were apparently two grand-nieces, bizarre and hoyden creatures both, who made their livings, in so far as I could gather, at housework here and there in the great city and who some time after I had known Bridget were either

imported by or else had out of a clear sky descended on my heroine from Ireland. Only and except for a certain lightness or brightness which they contributed to the Mullanphy atmosphere from time to time, they really constituted a moral problem and one somewhat different, I must say, from that of Cornelia and the mysterious child. I do not mean to imply that they were not good girls in the sense that their limited intelligence could grasp good. But . . . well . . . in so far as I could gather from one and another person observing this somewhat complicated scene, they were not strictly honest. That is . . . but there, let me proceed to the painting of them and let the peculiar data take care of itself.

Molly McGragh, for instance, was tall and pale, with a round face, grey eyes and lightish brown hair, not very attractive, but with a fairly genial manner and temperament and rather addicted to gossip. By way of contrast, her sister Katie, younger by at least two years, was cheerful, good-natured, amusing, flamboyant. Where Molly was usually sober and plain in grey or white, Katie was arresting always in a suit of terra cotta or strawberry, with a red or green hat adorned with white feathers, a boa, a parasol, and I know not what else. Whenever she came, which was often, she came quite noisily. Indeed, the first day I saw her it was her voice that startled the air and myself. "Ha, he! 'Tis yerself!" (To Cornelia) "Where's the Mullanphys? Where's the grafters? Out airin' thimselves? 'Tis as well. They should get the air once in a while." Then going to the rear air-shaft and waving to a tenant occupying rooms to the rear: "Ho, ho, is it yerself, Mrs. Hanfy? And how the divil are ye?"

And then Molly: "The grafters is out, is they? The two of us swears we'll never come here again. But 'tis the nature of us brings us, I do suppose, Cornelia. We're that soft-hearted. But 'tis unnecessary to ask ye how ye are. Ye're lookin' good."

To which Cornelia, from her dusty corner and sewing machine, replied: "Sure, I'm all right. Sit down, will ye? The old man ain't workin' again. I suppose he'll be findin' somethin' pretty soon though or we won't be here long, any of us."

"Not workin', ye say?" This from Molly. "He's been idle long enough now, I'm thinkin'. And always watchin' everybody else to see whether they're workin' or not. 'Tis strange how 'tis with some folks. 'Tis a mystery to me how it is that without work he gets the drink."

But if you were to assume from this that Bridget and her husband and the McGraghs were very much at outs, you are very much mistaken. You could not judge by what you heard any more than you could believe your own eyes. The approach of one to another in this peculiar world, to say nothing of their attitude toward life, toward friendship, and what not else, was literally topsy-turvy. Thus, should the Mullanphys *père* and *mère* happen to appear in the midst of such a condemnation as I have described, you would hear "me darlin's" and "How are ye, auntie dear? Sure, 'tis weeks since we've been over, but 'tis not fer not wantin' to come. Only Chuesday of last week 'twas me that was sayin' to Katie that we must be goin' to see our Aunt Bridget and be takin' her a little of somethin' to let her know we're not ungrateful fer all she did fer us. But last week 'twas Mrs. Whitebait herself was sick on our day off. But to-day the two of us was sayin', sick or not sick we would come this day, and here we be."

"And sure, me darlin's," Mrs. Mullanphy would rejoice. "'Tis welcome ye are, too, as the flowers in May. And to dinner it is that ye'll be stayin', the two of ye. Whist, now, 'tis not much that will be in the house, I'm fearin', with Mullanphy out of work this long while, but 'twill be somethin'. The store is but a step and I can run over this minute, or Cornelia can, and will be bringin' all we need before ye can say six or ten!"

And forthwith Cornelia, who had just been declaring that her parents were slave drivers, that they "borried" from her, and that they never gave her anything for the work she did, would begin suggesting appetizing dishes that she could prepare. And the McGraghs themselves would insist on paying for what was needed, since that was obviously what Mrs. Mullanphy intended, at the same time giving each other a sly look which seemed to suggest "grafter."

But the amazing turns these same feasts and presumably

gay conversations would take, and almost entirely due to the temperament of Mrs. Mullanphy, as I used to think. For first, and now that a good dinner loomed ahead of her (the McGraghs or Cornelia having gone to the store), she would proceed to indulge in a bit of cheering banter either from the front or rear window or across the open air-shaft. Ah, how often have I listened. "And is the old man's corns better, Mrs. Hanfy? Ah, 'tis the sad infliction!" Then pausing to sniff, "And what is it ye may be cookin'? Yes, I see the smoke of it. Lamb? Eggplant, ye say? Oh, steak." Then leaning still farther out of the window and talking louder: "'Tis not a lover of steak I am meself. What? Corned-beef hash?" Turning and facing whoever might chance to be inside, she might add, somewhat censoriously and yet not entirely so: "She don't like the smoke seen comin' from out of her room. She's closed the window on me."

But we will assume that the arrangements for dining are progressing satisfactorily enough. The young nieces have bought and paid for the proposed feast. Cornelia, given the cash, has brought it. Mullanphy, a sleepily intoxicated person and usually somewhat dour, life seeming not too much or too important to him at any time, may be stalking about in an odd, silent way, his hat on the back of his head—never off—and his coat, winter or summer, slipped back off his shoulders and hanging rather limply and crumpled between the arms. Sober and working or drunk and idle, he was, as I had observed in the course of time, never quite able to face his wife bravely and roughly and yet never wholly afraid of her—a cross between a man who has never been wholly subdued and one who is still afraid to say too much.

Suddenly, in the midst of this, and after setting out to do all the cooking, and apparently not wishing to be interfered with in that quarter, Mrs. Mullanphy would bethink herself of the fact that whosoever might have paid for the dinner, it was she and none other who was cooking it, the McGraghs and others lolling about. Presto! "Mullanphy! Mullanphy! Will ye be standin' there and lettin' the steak burn up on me? And me with a dozen other things on me hands at once, and the coffee not boiled yet!"

Yet despite this and for all his awe of and therefore respect for his somewhat difficult and threatening wife, Mullanphy would know well enough that this shot was not for him. Rather, and as seemingly direct as it was, he would look blankly back from one of the front windows where he was standing, but without a word. On the other hand, Katie and Molly, and even Cornelia, for whom the remark was really intended, would run from whatever they were doing and come to the rescue, only decidedly resentful and ready to fight.

"Sure, Aunt Bridget," Katie might exclaim in an injured tone, "if ye want us to help you in the first place, why didn't ye say so? Certainly ye needn't make it look as though we didn't want to help." Then Mrs. Mullanphy, throwing up both hands and shaking her head, would wail: "If I'm not the unfortunate woman! If I'm not the persecuted one with ye, Katie McGragh! To think and I cannot talk but ye must be mistakin' the meaning of me. 'Tis Mullanphy himself who well knows 'tis his place to give me help, and dinner for six on the fire. If I do lose me temper, 'tis not with ye, or Cornelia either, but with him that should be helpin' me and never does."

And yet Mullanphy would stand there without a word. And Katie and Molly and Cornelia merely exchanging looks. And then presently, of course, there would be peace for the time being and more gassing about the neighbours until, and possibly because of, the loud talk and the air carrying the sounds across the halls and through the windows, there would be renewed argument between one neighbour and another and Mrs. Mullanphy and the nieces and Mullanphy or all, separately or collectively by turns. The "roilin's and scrapin's," as it were.

But to return to these nieces. One of the phases of Mrs. Mullanphy's dealings with them which puzzled me not a little, and concerning which as yet I have said nothing, was her somewhat lax and certainly far from religious or even moral attitude toward their rather moral-less point of view in regard to what can only be described as the property of others. And that in the face of her continued religious and conventional criticism of others. For her nieces, as well as

her daughter, as I gradually came to know, were inclined to purloin things from their various employers (quite numerous during the course of several years)—food, clothing, et cetera—and presently bring the same to Mrs. Mullanphy, who, as she was wont to declare, got her “stren’th” from her church. Only she took these same spoils, as I am very truly able to state, with some weak, if moral, reflection to the effect that extreme necessity tends to excuse deeds of this kind, however little it may repeal moral law. But how do I know all this? Well, for one thing, at one time there was one who lived on the floor above the Mullanphys and with whom they, as well as myself, were friendly, and who told me many amusing tales of strange goings-on in this respect. On the other hand, there were my own personal observations, based on a desire to know, as well as overheard scraps and long conversations with one or another of these same characters in these same halls or rooms.

But regardless of this, some of the facts in regard to these dishonestly-come-by gains relate to a certain afternoon in October, at which time the two nieces arrived from where they had been working—deserted because of unsatisfactory conditions—bearing between them half of a ham, a quarter of a side of bacon, two dozen eggs, a can of coffee, a package of tea, a table-cloth, and a few more such items, all of which and themselves included were received with open arms by Mrs. Mullanphy—who subsequently fell out with them because they stayed too long with her before getting another place. And yet the friendship and perhaps the generous purloining continued unbroken. Again there was Cornelia, who, I was once told, returned from her place of employment one afternoon, when Mr. and Mrs. Mullanphy and one of the nieces were present, fairly laden with spoils. One of her trophies—which she brought forth from under the voluminous cape she wore—was a yellow plush album containing portraits of people in no way related to her.

“’Tis the colour of it that I like most,” was her reported comment.

“And ye divil!” her mother’s only reply, the while she admired the binding.

“When I only get a dollar and me meals for seven or eight



hours' slavin', 'tis small blame to me to help meself," the intrepid robber is alleged to have announced.

On the other hand, Mrs. Mullanphy was not without a form of charity for others, as the following incident will show.

On the ground floor of her place lived the Kiltys—husband, wife, and fragile daughter of eleven or twelve. A grown-up son had disappeared. At one time, not so long after the above, they were about to be dispossessed for non-payment of rent. Michael Kilty, the father, was in many respects even worse than Mullanphy. He was no good at all. A brick-layer by trade, for one reason or another—drink, indifference, laziness—he had degenerated to the point where he was almost always out of work, and out of the masons' union also, an organization which had apparently dismissed him for his various sins. In the face of this he did not hesitate to "scab," a thing which infuriated the union men. Even when he did work, though, he would often disappear and leave his wife for six or eight weeks at a time. At other times, having loafed a long time and not having a cent on him, he would come home in rags, or sick, or at least pretending to be, and would hang around promising to do better when he got well and would then send his wife out to do washing until she too would fall ill. Yet for some reason she would endure all this, and more—ill-treatment of a physical nature, even so much as a beating from time to time.

On one occasion this model father, having been away for a long time and his wife in his absence having fallen ill and because of this having been unable to work, the Kilty furniture was about to be set out on the street. But Mrs. Mullanphy, having had few, if any, fights with Mrs. Kilty, whom she considered a deserving and much put-upon woman, was, at the last moment, moved to sympathy. What, the poor sick things to be set out on the sidewalk? Sure, all landlords were bloodsuckers and divils! Was not hers a true Irish heart, and would a true Irish heart go back on any other true Irish heart in its hour of distress? Scarcely. So, in the afternoon of the day the notice had been served on the Kiltys, and after the news had been spread and discussed throughout the building and no one had come to the rescue, she made her way down to their floor.

"Sure," she announced on her arrival, and referring to landlords and real estate dealers in general, "'tis the devil's own brood they are, fattenin' on the bodies of the pore ! 'Tis none of them that has the heart of a snake, or the dacency either, to see how it is with the pore. But what is it the paper says, anyhow—the notice ? One of ye read it to me, 'tis me eyes that are bad." (As I said before, she could not read.)

"'Pay to-morrow at noon or be required to vacate said premises,'" read Norah Kilty. "'This letter is in legal form and no other notice will be necessary.'"

"'Tis not worth the paper 'tis written on," exclaimed Mrs. Mullanphy, who because of many previous instances in which she herself, you may be sure, had been the subject of such a notice, had acquired at least the rudiments of proper legal procedure in all such cases. "Sure, the old devil's written ye this to save expenses. It costs from two-fifty to eight dollars for the regular notice, accordin' to the fees of the marshal and the marshal's men. And the landlord has to put everything out on the street in perfect order or ye can collect on him. Yes, indeed, so 'tis. And what's more, Mrs. Kilty, 'tis often a good plan in these cases to loosen up the back of a mirror or some such thing so 'twill fall out and break, fer nothin' is supposed to be broke. Nothin' ! And 'tis such things as might be helpin' ye to get a start, ye understand ? The court would be holdin', maybe, that what with damage and all that, a little somethin' might be due ye, ye see ? 'Tis not that I speak of this by any experience of me own, y' understand, but 'tis not the first case of dispossess I see, either."

"Oh, wurra, wurra ! Oh me, oh me !" wailed Mrs. Kilty. "'Tis not the wit I have to do it. 'Tis not the wit nor the stren'th either. And me old man out of work this three months now. And me son Tim away and down with pneumony in Philadelphy. And meself that upset with trouble and not knowin' how to do next. If only me husband was the sober man he might be, and with a better heart for the jobs he do get . . . !"

"But what becomes of the furniture once it do be set out, Mrs. Mullanphy, if ye know ?" This from Mrs. Hanfy, another inquisitive and sympathetic neighbour who had edged

in and was eager to know the ins and outs of dispossess proceedings generally.

"Sure, and I know very little of these cases except as I have seen 'em here and there in me time," replied Mrs. Mullanphy, loftily and aloofly. "We was never dispossessed ourselves, but 'tis me recollection that unless the furniture be took away again be the tenant, the Bureau of Encumbrances moves it to the City Yard. 'Tis the laa, I believe. Only, be what I hear—'tis all hearsay, y'understand—ye must go down and see about it within twenty-four hours else the Bureau of Encumbrances can do whatever they please with it. But whisht ye!" she added, as Mrs. Kilty burst into a fresh fit of weeping. "'Tis not so bad as ye're after thinkin'. 'Tis the judge of the district that can do somethin' fer ye, too. 'Tis to him ye must go with the notice. This be the Eight District—Charless Street—if I'm not mistaken, and 'tis to the judge of the court there ye must go. Me darter Cornelia will be after goin' with ye, if ye like. But, sure, any policeman can be tellin' ye where to go. Maybe ye can get a stay from the judge. Sometimes if ye be after tellin' him a sad story, 'tis easy to take a week's time at least. And between that and the work ye may get and the expenses to the landlord ye may bring on him by way of damage to yer furniture, ye can maybe make out. 'Tis me that has seen it done before." Yet in the face of this Mrs. Kilty continued to cry, whereupon Mrs. Mullanphy continued: "And sure, and ye're not the first whose furniture was set out on the street fer want of a bit of rent. In these days, and with the wolves that is ownin' property, 'tis small wonder."

"'Tis hard, 'tis hard," interpolated Mrs. Hanfy at this point.

"Sure an' 'tis," continued Mrs. Mullanphy. "But listen, 'tis easy to tell a sad story. Sure, anyone can do it. 'Twould be better, of course, if ye had a child or two—a baby in arms is the best—but since ye have a husband and son sick and out of work, 'tis as well. So don't be taken on so. Besides, there be lots of children in the house. Let ye but ask fer the loan of two. Ye pay yer rent to the agent, don't ye, the same as the rest of us? Well then, they'll not be after knowin' whether the children are yer own or not. Once ye're before the judge,

ye can say ye have the little ones to look after and no place to go this night. 'Tis no judge in New York will turn ye out, and ye with children to look after. 'Tis meself would be lettin' ye have the rent an' I had it. But Delia ye may take fer me if ye will. For I'll not be seein' ye turned out on the streets at that. If the judge won't be givin' ye more time, ye can come with me for a day or two. Room fer yer things I have not, but as for you and Norah, yes. No doubt your husband will be lookin' fer another place the while, and yerself too, and findin' somethin'."

But as it turned out, Mrs. Kilty being sick and not having the courage to go before the judge with a borrowed child as her own, the furniture was set out on the sidewalk and removed by the Bureau of Encumbrances. And Mrs. Kilty and her daughter having been escorted to the Mullanphy apartment, it was not twenty-four hours before Kilty returned, and finding his wife thus comfortably housed and no rent to pay, fixed himself, by a process of blather and a hard luck story and promises, upon the Mullanphys also. But after three or four days of this, and no sign on the part of Kilty that he was developing any intention to work (although Mrs. Kilty was out seeking something to do), Mrs. Mullanphy's "true Irish" rose. Only, instead of taking the situation directly in hand and ordering them out, her curiously involute and roundabout nature dictated an entirely different course. Better to hint, and hint broadly, as in the case of her nieces, but more for the benefit of Kilty than for his wife and daughter. And with her husband, whether by pre-arrangement or not I could never guess, serving as a foil or false target. Thus all would be gathered in the combination dining-room and kitchen. Kilty would be lounging near the mantel, behind the stove, where it was warmest. Mrs. Mullanphy, her aproned sides slanting wide, would be seated at the table. Mrs. Kilty and her daughter, mayhap, would be engaged in cleaning up after dinner, Mrs. Mullanphy having done the work of preparing it.

Sewing or mending, but contemplating with dissatisfied eyes the imperturbable Kilty, who would be calmly smoking a pipe and meditating, hands on stomach, she would finally reach the point where the sight of him would be too much

for her, and would begin, presumably addressing her husband :

" Oh, but it's you that knows how to live without hurtin' yer health, it is. The idler that ye are, Mullanphy, the loafer." Whereupon Mullanphy, knowing full well that this was not for him but Kilty, would shift perhaps a trifle uneasily and yet not wholly uncomfortably, and perhaps after a time, seeing his wife's eyes fixed steadily upon him, would turn to Kilty who, without a trace of embarrassment, might continue to rest as before, and inquire : " Ye've found nothin' in yer line to-day again, I suppose, Kilty ? "

" Not to-day, no," would the imperturbable Kilty reply. " There's plenty of work for union men, of course, if only me card was good, but not for the likes of me in the shape I'm in now. I did go into four places, though. There's a job over at the car company, I hear. None but non-union men there. I'm goin' over there in the mornin'. If it's not more than four hundred brick a day, I can manage in me present state, I think."

And at this Mullanphy, his duty done, might resume his former contemplative position. But not so his wife, who was not to be put off so easily.

" Ah, four hundred brick ; 'tis a lot for one man to lay, I suppose. But 'tis a gentleman's life *you* lead, Mullanphy, just the same, and without even that much work, makin' yerself comfortable where it's warm and no meals to pay for. 'Tis you I mean, Mullanphy ; always idle, always 'tis somethin' that stops ye from findin' somethin'. Sure, and 'tis a wonder to me that any women find anythin' to do these days, 'tis so hard men be findin' it to get anything at all."

But the shrewd Kilty was by no means so easily to be routed. On the contrary, slyer and more dissolute than Mullanphy, and as cunning and much more callous than even Mrs. Mullanphy (who was cunning enough), and with the effrontery of the devil himself, he would " stick " or " sit tight," as we say the while such broadsides as the above were levelled at him. But not so either his wife or daughter, who daily sought work. Yet in this instance the last straw was finally laid by himself when some three or four days later—and after

this much sponging—he finally arrived on the scene one evening, drunk and with a drunken companion, cut and bleeding from having been thrown out of a saloon. It was Mrs. Mullanphy who, peeling potatoes at the time, saw him first; and then Mullanphy, breaking the slats of a green-grocer's box on the window sill with a flat iron. Mrs. Kilty and her daughter were sitting about rather helplessly. Cornelia was working out and had not returned as yet. Little Delia was playing in the street below.

Mrs. Mullanphy's first impulse as the door opened and the two bums stood revealed, one holding the other up, was to shout: "Mullanphy, by the Blessed Mother of God!" The stranger's cheek and forehead were badly cut and smeared with blood and Kilty was saying most helpfully: "Wait'll I tie a rag around yer head. That'll fix it. Wait'll ye wash the blood off, then ye'll be all right when yer head's tied up."

But Mrs. Mullanphy did not think so. "Jesus, Mary and all the Blessed Saints!" she exclaimed. "I could never stand the sight o' blood. I'm faint, Mullanphy. Will no one be puttin' the likes of that out o' here? Will ye be lettin' the likes o' that in here?"

Whereupon Mullanphy drew dubiously if by no means threateningly nearer.

But Kilty, drunk, was by no means to be dismayed at this reception. On the contrary, he was all cheer and hope. "Will ye let me explain, Mrs. Mullanphy?" he pleaded genially, the while he sustained his companion as best he might. "He's only been cut, see? Some bums up at the job where we was workin' jumped on him. We was workin' on a job, see, and some bums . . ."

"Yes, 'tis well I know who the bums was! And as for the job, I know that, too. Job, indeed! Mullanphy, will ye be after lettin' the two of them come in here? Ain't it enough that they be eatin' us out of house and home but must be searchin' the streets fer bums, as if there wasn't a houseful here now? And me workin' and slavin', and yerself and Cornelia, too, fer the likes o' them. Have ye no spunk at all? Must I be slavin' here and not enough to eat in the house as 'tis?"

At this the shameless and undaunted Kilty had the drunken effrontery to come forward and exclaim : " 'Tisn't dinner he's after, Mrs. Mullanphy. 'Tisn't that. He's had his dinner, see ? We both have. 'Tis his face ; 'tis his face he wants to wash up. I'm only bringin' him in to wash his face, see ? "

" And to stay the night, yes, like yerself. And to breakfast in the mornin'. And to supper the morrow night again. And after that for weeks and months like yerself and yer family that ye won't support. 'Tis more than morshall patience can bear. And scarce room to move and breathe as 'tis, Mullanphy."

And Mullanphy, now coming forward, added : " Say, now, this *is* too much, Kilty. Man, ye can't expect to bring yerself and him in the fix he's in here. 'Tis to the hospital he should go."

" Yes, after he's fixed his face. Yes, sure, after he's fixed his head."

" No, not after he fixes his head, but right now ! " This from the now thoroughly aroused Mrs. Mullanphy. " And yerself and yer wife and yer darter. To be sure, I pities them more than I do you, but 'tis the lot of ye must go. Is Mullanphy and meself to be workin' to feed a regiment ? Is there no end to the lot o' ye, and will ye be searchin' the streets fer more ? Then out of me sight with the lot of ye ! And go laughin' to yerself fer the fool you've made of Bridget Mullanphy ! "

By this time Mrs. Kilty and Norah, seeing the trouble that had been brought upon them by this worthless head of their family, were meekly packing up their belongings, making bundles of little things and rolling them up. Incidentally putting on extra skirts, one above the other, and pointing out silently to each other the things they had forgotten.

" Be sure, Mrs. Mullanphy," coaxed the artful Kilty, " ye don't want to get so excited. You're takin' the wrong meanin' out o' this."

" Wrong meanin', is it ? And me provisions laid away for the winter gone this long time, and no money to pay the rent that's due this Chuesday next ? Daylight robbers ! Midnight robbers ! That's what ye are ! Not yer wife, but you ! "

"Ah, well," conceded Kilty, realizing at last the futility of coaxing, "if ye don't want us to stay here, that's all right. We can go some place else. Sure, we can. Come on, Mike, I can take ye to a hospital." And down the steps they lurched.

"And 'tis good riddance to the both of ye!" shouted Mrs. Mullanphy after them. "But who's to give me back me butter, of which ye ate five pounds, and me fish and me steak and me flour? Where's the bottle of relish that lasted but the one meal? That the devil might have choked ye with it! Robbers! Robbers!"

"We're very sorry, Mrs. Mullanphy," pleaded the humble Norah Kilty, frightened out of her wits at this storm. "We're goin' now. 'Tis that sorry we are to have been the cause of so much trouble." And Mrs. Kilty added: "Yes, we are that. We're goin' right now. 'Tis more than sorry I am fer all the trouble I've brought on ye, and 'twasn't fer him I wouldn't have stayed the time I did, but 'twas he that made me."

"And well I know it, the robber! But 'tis not fer yerself that I'm talkin', but fer him, the robber! 'Tis the likes of him and his bums that has brought 'ye where ye are this day, Mrs. Kilty. But the good Lord Himself wouldn't be after feedin' him and his drunken friends and the lot of ye into the bargain. But 'tis to-night ye'll be stayin', or to-morrow maybe, the two of ye, now that he's gone." Her tone softened.

But no, the Kiltys would not, and sensibly enough under the circumstances. Instead they went crying down the stairs after Kilty had disappeared with his friend and were neither seen nor heard of more, in so far as I know.

About this time, the agent of the building in which I rented a floor chanced to ask me whether I knew anyone who would, for the gift of one or two rooms in the basement, rent free, perform the duties of a janitress. I immediately suggested Mrs. Mullanphy. For despite all of her rowing with her neighbours and their charges in regard to her cleanliness or lack of cleanliness, she was really comparatively clean. More, having heard her asseverate so often how much better she would do if surrounded by those who would let her alone, I suggested to this agent that if he would instruct her sharply



as to possible visitors and the heinousness of loud talking, let alone shouting or quarrelling—for which there was small opportunity in this very different vicinity—I thought all would be well. And should she fail to behave herself, of course she was to be compelled to vacate at once.

And following this advice of mine, and with a clear understanding of what was desired, as I assumed, came Mrs. Mullanphy and Mullanphy also, his coat below his shoulders, as always, and Cornelia and little Delia, and in due time the two nieces, Molly and Katie McGragh—with such rags of furniture as I will not trouble to describe. Only finding me master of the parlour floor and others like myself living above, the entire family, for a short time at least, was very quiet, Mrs. Mullanphy, for one, devoting herself to washing and cleaning for all, the others working, and no quarrels that I could hear between them. Only—and just the same—and quarrelling or no quarrelling—tragedy, as I might have expected, since with or because of the combination of personal ties about them, neither Mrs. Mullanphy nor her daughter were suitable for the work in hand. Their social standards were a little too decayed. Also, and via this same tragedy, a clear white light on the mystery of Cornelia and little Delia.

For one hot summer afternoon, after all had been in this new place some four or five months, there arrived outside Mrs. Mullanphy's basement door a small, pinched, intense and decidedly distraught-looking Irish woman, who after knocking and ringing with great violence at the Mullanphy door and the two basement windows—which seemed for the occasion to have been closed and shuttered against her—took a position before one of them (and this same just below one of mine which was directly above) and began calling. But what? For a long time I did not know what this droning voice was, and only by opening one of my windows did I at last gather the import of it.

“Come out, now! Come out, ye ——! Come out, ye ——! Come out, and I'll teach ye to let me husband alone! Ye ——, you! Ye ——, you! Come on out now! Come on out!”

And so on and on and over and over, like a droning fly,

with the little woman rattling at the shutters or the iron basement gate, betimes, but no faintest noise or sign from within. Yet that some of the Mullanphy family were below I well knew, for only a little time before there had been voices which had been audible enough through a rear area-way. None the less, silence. And with the little woman trying, as I could see, to peer through the blinds.

After a considerable time, however, during which a street crowd began to gather—first a few small children, then men and women—and the noise of this same becoming loud with inquiry or wonder—that same basement hall door under the outside stoop opened and Cornelia Mullanphy stepped forth. A strange girl, or woman, that Cornelia, grotesque and a little sad, as I always thought, with her thin, angular body, high cheek bones, red hair, and her of course confused and befuddled because inadequate mind. And always, as I had long noted, in staccato colours, a green or red or yellow shirt-waist, coupled with a brown or dark green skirt. And this very day the same—bizarre, flamboyant. Also her manner, as I had often noted, was a little flighty. And this day the same—a girl or woman who seemed weakly and so helplessly drawn to men, but one who had, none the less, never proved very attractive to any, or at least few, and, in consequence, I assume, spiritually distraite. And behind her on this occasion her mother, unusually nervous and pale, as I thought (the neighbourhood overawing her somewhat, I presume), and saying as she came: “Have no words with her, I say! Have no words with her, fer the love o’ God! ’Tis nonsense to have words with her, I say!”

But for all of that, the intense and dour Cornelia paying no attention, her face very white, her eyes narrowed. Instead exclaiming—and that most defiantly for her: “Who’re ye callin’ those names to, say? Who?” And glaring. As a matter of fact, she was quite dramatic, far more picturesque and intense than ever she had seemed before.

“’Tis well ye know who I’m talkin’ to, ye ——, you!” exclaimed the little woman from a higher level, to which at the sound of the basement door opening she had retreated. “’Tis yerself that I’m callin’, ye ——! ’Tis you that’ll not be lettin’ me man alone, but must be runnin’ after him, and

him the father of two children, and you not able to get a man of yer own ! 'Tis well I know of ye from Barry Street, ye —— ! And with a child of yer own that has no father but must be owned by yer mother for ye ! ”

“ Say that again and I'll slap yer face fer ye ! ” declared the infuriated Cornelia, stepping close.

“ 'Tis me that says it, and 'tis you that knows it's true ! ” insisted the stranger. “ 'Tis Cornelia Dempsey ye are that lived in Barry Street, and not Mullanphy, and 'tis me man that ye're tryin' to take from me this day, since ye can't get one of yer own, ye —— you ! ”

At this, smack came the hand of the intense, white Cornelia square across the mouth and cheek of the older woman, and then smack again from the other side. “ I'll show ye whether ye'll rattle me windows and say what ain't so ! ”

At first the intruder appeared to be completely stunned by this—beaten, no less, for she fell back, white and weak—the crowd, of course of whom I made one, gazing in amaze. Then : “ Aha ! ” hissed the little woman, laying at the same time a thin, worn hand across her mouth and cheek. “ Aha ! ” And then : “ But wait ! You'll strike me, will ye ? And after tryin' to steal me husband from me ! But wait ! 'Tis not the last of me or you ! I'll be back ! ” And off she started up the hot, sunlit street, at first walking very fast and then, as her shame and rage grew, breaking into an odd, awkward lope until as she approached the nearest corner she turned, and disappeared. But not for long, as she said. She was soon back. Only in the meantime, the cautious Bridget, now very much excited, had seized her irate daughter by the shoulders and pulled her down into and through the basement door and closed it.

But as I say, in a few minutes (the doors and windows below stairs still tightly closed and the place silent) the little woman returned. But this time with nothing less than an axe in her hand—a large, hard, glistening axe. And behind her, trailing, two children, her own as I could tell, but following without her consent. For, as I pictured it all to myself, she must have rushed into her home and out again, her children amazedly seeing her seize the axe and then following after her. But as I could now see, her mood was really murderous

—no thought of fear or compromise this time. And at once she began as before, only in much louder tone, the while she banged at the shutters with the axe. “Come out, now . . .” etc. etc.

Indeed so white was she and panting, that as she struck the first blow I seized my telephone and called for the police, explaining, as soon as I had the neighbourhood station house, that the situation was desperate. Also that a large crowd was gathering. Whereupon an officer was promised at once. Then I returned to the window and listened to such an outburst as I had scarcely ever heard before—never in that neighbourhood—the wronged Irish wife now shouting her ills at the top of her voice, and banging the shutters with such violence as finally to break one through. The scandal, the disgrace, I thought. And now, no doubt, murder into the bargain. And I had brought them here. Ye Gods—my own studio in danger of being forfeited. I was in real distress, as I can tell you.

By this time, however, the policeman for whom I had first called had arrived, also teamsters from a livery stable over the way, and storekeepers, saloon keepers—the riff-raff as well as the well-dressed pedestrians, and children from all the neighbouring houses—a huge crowd which blocked traffic and stared in amazement at this odd figure with her axe and two children. Yet not a sound from the rooms below; not a whisper. And the police now demanding in sharp, aggressive tones: “And what’s the trouble here now? Why will ye be here in broad daylight destroyin’ property? Is it murder ye want to do? Let me have the axe now.” And, much to my personal relief, seizing and securing the axe even as he spoke.

But the little woman still continuing to shout. And the two children crying. And the crowd now buzzing, murmuring, even laughing or cat-calling—some yoo-hooing and even whistling—the result of a fiasco, I assume. None the less, as I saw it, a most scandalous scene, and one that I by my recommendation to my landlord had brought about. And what would he say now when he heard of this? What excuse could I offer? For he was a none too liberal, in fact highly conventional, landlord, who seemed always to think that I

too was conventional. Ah, my honourable life ! My previous good name ! I feared the worst for myself as well as the family below, but wondered still more about the attitude of Mrs. Mullanphy. Why the quiet ? Why no defiance, no martial display of dust-pan and broom, or mop and wash-rag ? A most amazing stillness this—one such as I would not have deemed possible in her case, and especially under such circumstances. And yet so it was.

In due course, though, the police had succeeded not only in disarming and removing the violent visitor—taking her away and advising her, I suppose, to see a lawyer and file an action—but in dispersing the crowd also. None the less, and for hours after that, and even several days, not the lifting of a curtain or the opening of a door, not even after evening fell. Yet up the rear area-way, between six and seven the next evening, the most subdued of voices—where I could scarcely detect—in whispered conversation. And some time after midnight, more talk. And then Mullanphy and Mrs. Mullanphy and Cornelia going out. But where ? And then two days after—and due, no doubt, to a suggestion on the part of the landlord—a small, dusty moving van, removing their few and humble belongings. And then silence. They were gone. Moved. But with no word to me or anyone. And after that I never saw either Cornelia or Delia or the two nieces again.

But a curious thing. Some three or four years later I began to use for cleaning purposes a sometimes drunken, and always impoverished and down at heels, yet rather intelligent and interesting Village character—Johnny Morton by name—who did odd jobs such as scrubbing, cleaning, washing windows, and the like for various Greenwich Villagers. Some seemed to find him amusing as well as useful and so were pleased to have him around, although quite frequently he was either too drunk or weak from dissipation to fulfil his stipulated agreements at fifty cents an hour and so earn his daily bread. Worse, he was, among other things, as I subsequently learned, an ex-convict and a dope addict, one who rather more than less bore the marks of both. His was a wasted and worthless look at times, so querulous, blue-nosed, nervous, and generally rickety as to be pitiable. But when sober he was genial and

obliging, and useful enough, courteous as well as humorous. For a long time when he was about my place I paid not the least attention to him. He did my work and did it fairly well, and I paid him and let him go. But then one day, being in an unusually genial and communicative mood, he announced: "I used to live around here, you know." He was industriously polishing a brass coal-box in the middle of my studio floor at the time.

"Yes?"

"Yep, sure. I was born over here on Barrow Street." A slight sniff. He was always sniffing as though afflicted with a perpetual cold, or scratching as though afflicted with fleas, or wiping his nose with his coat sleeve.

"Barrow Street can at least lay claim to something then," I commented.

"Yep, sure. My old man used to be head harness man in that old stable at Tenth and Waverly."

"Really? Well, just what do you mean—harness man?"

"He kept all the harness in order, you know, shined and oiled all the harnesses of the horses, forty-fifty sets a day. I used to help him when I was a kid. Many's the kick I'd get fer not keepin' 'em shined right."

"Indeed! Pleasant youthful memories," I commented.

"Yep, sure. That's right. (Sniff.) The old man was pretty quick that way. Bad tempered. He used to drink and he was all the worse when he was drunk. He's not so bad now, though, I hear. He's gettin' older."

"Natural enough," I commented. "Age will do that. You see him occasionally then, I take it."

"Yep."

"But you don't live at home?"

"Who, me? Oh, no!" This last with a swipe of coat sleeve across his nose. "They wouldn't have me. I ain't lived at home for years now, ever since I ran away. The old man wouldn't have me now, nor the old woman either, I guess. I wouldn't ask 'em to. But I see 'em around just the same. They got sore about something I did. But I could get along with my mother if it wasn't for the old man. She ain't so bad."

(Fairly complimentary to one's mother, I thought, all

things considered.) "And what is your real name, Johnny?" I ventured. "I never did think to ask you before."

"Who, me? Oh, well, I go by the name of Morton now, since the family don't like to have me around any more, but my real name is Dempsey. My mother and father changed their name, too, to Mullanphy. But Dempsey is the real name. I got 'em into some trouble, see, and they changed the name."

Aha! I said to myself. Then a little after: "Jabez Mullanphy, by any chance? I used to know a man around here by that name."

"Why, sure, he's me father. Yuh know him? He used to be a teamster after he left the livery stable." He seemed to be a little startled himself.

"Yes, I think I know him, and your mother, too. They lived here in Bank Street once, didn't they, about five or six years ago?"

"Yep, sure. Did my mother ever do any work for you?"

"Well, not directly. I lived in a house where she did some work though."

"Well, I guess that's her. Big woman with grey hair?"

"Yes."

"My mother wouldn't be so bad," he volunteered, rather indifferently now that the interest of this discovery had paled, "if she didn't have such an awful temper. Gee, but she's got a rough temper! But the old man made her that way, I guess. He never would do what he ought to do, nor me, either—work or anything."

At this point, and without any particular emotion that I could see, he launched into a long dissertation on family ties, family duties, and the like. I gathered that, besides the daughter Cornelia, there was this same Johnny, but no other child. Hence little Delia must be Cornelia's, and so the mystery was at last solved. But no word from Johnny as to the child. He did not say and I would not ask. After that he drifted out of my life and I never saw him again.

But about three years after this conversation I chanced to change cars one noon hour at Times Square. The crowds! The rush! You know. Nearing the stairs leading down

to the Seventh Avenue platform I heard a voice, a familiar one, as it seemed to me, bewailing and anxious.

"Oh-h-h-h, where is he? Where's me man? Mullanphy, in God's name, where are ye? Where's he gone to? In God's name, Mullanphy! I've lost him! My God! Ow-w-w, what'll I do now? And not a nickel on me! Ow! And where's he gone? Me old man! I'm lost! Oh-h-h!"

And turning, sure enough, there stood Mrs. Mullanphy in the flesh. A little stouter, a little greyer even—not much—a little dustier, maybe, but lurching and pitching like a ship in a heavy sea, ascending the steps inside the subway while I was descending them. And behind her, at a distance but following because he heard her shrieks and wondered what it was all about, Mullanphy himself. The same blank and yet equivocal expression on his face, his hat for once not on the back of his head, a rag of a grey overcoat over his shoulders. And trying to catch up with his bulky wife, who was lurching directly away from him and who had evidently lost track of him in the crush. Finally, catching up with her, he yelled: "Where're ye goin', ye old fool? Can't ye see I'm right here? Didn't ye just folly me down these steps a minute ago?"

"And why the divil didn't ye stay near me?" came the old, quick, defiant and irritated reply. "And what'll ye be gallootherin' here and there fer and me not able to keep up with ye? And without a cent in me pocket and me not knowin' where 'tis ye're goin' anyhow! Give me me fare! Give me me fare, and thin ye can go where ye like and I'll go where I like."

A large percentage of the crowd, hurrying as it was, paused to chortle and guffaw. Fine, I thought! The old Mullanphy spirit! Not dead yet. And despite so many ills. Hurrah! Her goodly soul has not been utterly crushed, thanks be! She does live. And she can fight, hale and forceful as ever.

Yet with the nervous fear of being recognized and seized upon as an old friend in the midst of this exciting confab, I dashed into an intrushing express which was just stopping, and which plainly they were not taking, and was whisked



away. But not without a backward and even sentimental look. For had there not been Barrow Street? The sisters McGragh, the dour-minded Cornelia, that awful scene in Tenth Street? Great! Life vigorous and wilful if degraded, pitiful and strange. Yet why, as I consoled myself, renew our old and always amicable relations? Was she not doing well enough, apparently? And I also. I thought so. Comparatively so, at any rate. But oh, that hearty, defiant Irish-ness, so to say. The upstanding vigour amidst all ills.

And because of these speculative musings in regard to this same Bridget Mullanphy, her troubles and her temper, I was carried two stations past my getting-off place. And proceeded to grumble at her for that.

THE END





